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THOSE I REMEMBER



PRINCESS CATHERINE RADZIWILL
(Catherine Davin)

THOSE I REMEMBER

By

PRINCESS CATHERINE RADZIWILL

(CATHERINE DANVIN)



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INTRODUCTION

TALLEYRAND said that those who had not lived before the great French Revolution could never know how sweet life could be. The same remark may be applied to the rising generation, who in the course of time will take the place of those who lived prior to the war which changed the map of Europe. Before the war society believed itself humane and civilized. The war proved that this was an illusion, that man to-day is just as brutal as he was three thousand years ago, when our ancestors fought for survival.

Before the war, conventions held society together; conventions sometimes antiquated, it is true, and often out of place, but which were respected because they upheld traditions of politeness, self-restraint, respect for the independence of others, and which, after all, helped to make the world a pleasanter place to live in. Society was perhaps—as I shall show—artificial in its mannerisms and smallness of mind, but at the same time everybody felt comfortable, and existence had an atmosphere of rest, contentment and elegance.

To-day things are different. What is left of society has had to make up its mind to relinquish

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haunts of Fashion to war profiteers, *nouveaux riches*, and men and women of no importance whatever.

Old age itself has absolutely changed its aspect. Grandmothers in lace caps have disappeared, together with their knitting. Their grand-daughters still knit, but it is jumpers for themselves instead of mufflers for the poor. To-day it is youth that rules, youth that is supreme and thinks itself entitled to lay down the law for its elders as well as for the rest of the world. The war quite brusquely raised youth from the dependence in which it had been kept by custom and prejudice. The war called upon it to fight; it gave youth an importance which it had never dreamt it could attain and which it accepted as something rather overdue. Youth pushed back old age ruthlessly. It started to dictate its own new laws and imagined those laws to be really wonderful. Youth honestly believed that because it could drive a motor-car it could also save the world from what it called its ignorance and lack of understanding. Youth became arrogant, which is a different thing from being impertinent; and youth, imbued with the conviction that it alone understood the needs of a dying civilization, started to brush aside the past and in imagination to build a new world on the ruins of the old one. Under its attacks tradition collapsed, ancient customs and manners were derided, an entirely different society came to the front from nowhere, driving away much of the sweetness of life.

Of old, life was sweet indeed; it was interesting;

Introduction

it was surrounded by an atmosphere of love and joy ; but it has become a memory : a memory of dead people, of vanished glories !

Yet, are those old days to pass into the limbo of forgotten things? I would lift the veil for a few moments to give the young and ardent souls of to-day a glimpse of Europe as it was, in the hope that it may interest them ; to give those of us who have seen longer years some moments in the quiet vales of memory.

THOSE I REMEMBER

CHAPTER I

THEN AND NOW

PARIS! Vienna! Rome! St. Petersburg! London!—what pictures the very names bring to the vision. Pictures of the pulsing life of the capitals; of the personages there met; of the brilliant stream of conversation; of the work and successes—aye, and the failures, too; of those who, rightly, could be called “personalities” in the exclusive circle of Royalty, in Society, in Art, in Literature, the Drama, Politics and the Church.

Nor lifeless pictures at that, but as virile as the most modern of films—light, colour, movement—the range of human emotion in all its varied modes of expression.

Yet it is a bold writer who embarks the pen upon “Reminiscences.” Of late there have been many, perhaps too many; some bright with interest, others deadly dull. The approach, in some, has been timorous, seeing but little beyond things on the surface, with a tame refusal, or maybe inability, to probe into the actuating realities below the surface. A content, as it were, to watch the marionettes, without curiosity as to the wires from above, or

Those I Remember

what nimble fingers all unseen give the similitude of "life" to the galvanic actions of the puppets on the stage. And, after all, in the final analysis, "all the world's a stage."

Others have seen too much. They have seen more than there was to see, and so invested reminiscence with a halo of dicta, under the guise of comment, that the true function of the chronicler has been lost in the vocabulary of the commentator.

Few among writers of recollections have taken a purely objective point of view. Such a view is necessary in referring to that interesting epoch in the history of mankind ending with the Great War. It is a dead world; indeed, in those days, even to the superficial observer, it was hardly more than placidly alive when we compare its movement with 1924, though for all its seeming lack of what Americans call "pep," to one on the inside of things it was intensely alive in its own quiet, cultured way.

Life, then, was interesting, principally because it was so peaceful, so devoid of violent passions and dreadful calamities, and because it "carried on" in quiet enjoyment of the delights of existence; for the upper classes, these were really halcyon days.

As I think of London, Paris, Vienna and St. Petersburg in those days, when life during the season was one big round of pleasure, when people were solely occupied by the thoughts of the ball they were to attend on one night and the garden party or concert they were to grace on the next day, it seems

Changing Days

to me that I must be dreaming of something which never existed, which could never have existed, something so lovely that it could never have been. And yet it was all true, all real, very real indeed. Men and women were happy. Young widows and bereaved mothers were the exception. Everybody had money, or lived as if they had; and if, from time to time, some big social scandal came to startle the quietude, it was quickly forgotten, even if it caused a nine days' wonder. The world wanted to amuse itself, and it succeeded in doing so to an extent that satisfied itself.

Then came the Deluge in the shape of the Great War.

While it lasted, the social life of "smart society" was both altered and curtailed; habits and movements changed, a new focus came into consideration. Week-end parties still went on, but under difficulties; conversations, in spite of every endeavour to keep them in the old channels, somehow always reverted to what was going on "over there"; even flirtations changed their character, losing much of that veil of idealism which hung between them and the judgments of a wicked crowd. People felt life had become so uncertain that it was a cruel mockery to waste what was left of it in sentimental talk, which more and more came to be classed as twaddle. Life became more direct, more stark. When one does not know whether one will be alive the next day, even one's love affairs become matter-of-fact, and romances assume a certain

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prosaic nature which does away with their old-time charm. Then again, Mrs. Grundy had necessarily to step aside during the turmoil of what was called war work—a work in which everybody, men, women and girls, not to mention children, participated with a feverish energy. It threw barriers down and brought a certain looseness in what had been spoken of formerly as class distinction. Classes disappeared, in part because everybody became “no class” in all the elastic implications of the words. “Doing one’s bit,” as it was called, explained many things, even the fact that people were doing wrong, both morally and socially.

After the Armistice, however, the world tried to settle down to its old habits. But this proved impossible. For one thing, society of pre-war days had disappeared, together with Thrones, Empires and Sovereigns. Among other things, Society lost its international character; its denizens had ceased to be cards of one pack. They began to differentiate, to look upon each other with a certain degree of suspicion. The political antagonism existing between countries had invaded personal relations, and even the most polite of people tried to ascertain what kind of passport his or her neighbour was carrying before thawing from frozen politeness. With it all, however, outsiders with no other recommendation but money had not even to force the doors, because they were opened wide to them. Society became chummy with men and women who before the war they would not have allowed to cross their

The Golden Key

threshold. The one great social and political force which survived the agony of the war, to emerge unscathed, and stronger, more powerful than ever, was Money. It did everything, and gave everything, except good manners, tact, and knowledge of the world.

The curious symptom of the new state of things was that not one among the old and haughty aristocrats who had made or marred a reputation in bygone days, tried to raise voice against this invasion of their most sacred haunts by the newly-rich outsiders. And, what was worse, they did not even attempt to raise them to their own level; they dropped themselves to theirs, finding it vastly more convenient and more comfortable. Society became "no class" in reality.

Soon the pretty conventions which had made existence so pleasant in olden times, which had invested times ago with a tinge of romance, poetry and stately dignity, became a subject of mirth; ere long they will entirely disappear and be forgotten. Already we have seen in London the first evening reception where the guests appeared in business suits; within a few years evening clothes also may become a tradition. Why not appear at dinner in white flannel trousers and a silk shirt, as most Americans do at summer resorts? It would be ever so much more comfortable, even if it were not so chic.

Thinking of all this, I cannot help feeling sad, probably because I am too old to adapt myself to

Those I Remember

modern habits and customs. I wish either that the world could return to its old character or else that I could be carried away to some far-off place whence I would not be compelled to look upon all these new horrors, because horrors they are in my eyes; but——

Yet before I fall entirely into my dotage, I have made up my mind to try, at least, to paint for my readers a picture of society as it was, and such as I knew it before the War and the Peace swept it away; to delineate society, not only in London, but everywhere in Europe, to tell of certain outstanding personalities, and to recall some of the big social events which constituted its landmarks. They are gone, to be no more, at least not in the shape they assumed in those bygone days, so perhaps it may interest a few to learn how they had appeared to us who took a part in them, and to the world at large who read with feverish interest the daily papers which contained accounts of the doings of the Upper Ten. To-day it looks for something else in the columns of the dailies; it searches for news of the Stock Exchange or of the cotton market—life is too feverish and too superficial, and the majority is too eager to get the last ounce out of its own relaxations to heed the posings and pastimes of Society!

London even before the war was the capital of Europe. "*A tout Seigneur, tout honneur*," as one says in French. It was in London that one met the world's most interesting people and celebrities. It was London that gave the note to many things; it

London

was in London that social reputations were made or marred ; therefore it is of London I am going first to speak, of London before the "Deluge." After that, the other social centres will follow, with their peculiarities, their personalities, their pleasures and their scandals, such as they were. It will be no bare review of facts, though the facts will be there, but a story developing on natural lines—the story of those days before 1914, that time so few remember in spite of having lived in it. Romance will be in it in plenty ; intrigue, too. The play of ambition, of greed, of popularity, even notoriety ; things noble, things base ; motives and manners ; and with it all, threading the narrative as beads on a string, the revelation of human nature, kindly and unassuming in the main, with here and there a mean streak, here and there foibles to laugh at, idiosyncrasies to condone, self-sacrifices to admire—a picture of the daily lives of the men and women of my world, a kaleidoscope of art and letters and drama, of diplomacy and politics—of social life, in short, as I knew it and moved among it in various parts of Europe in the days under review.

CHAPTER II

QUEENS AND PRINCES

“YES, I love my little London; there is no place like it in the world, so pleasant and so wicked. And then, whilst I enjoy it, I know that it is only for a time, that we are all living before a deluge!”

It was in these terms that Kenneth Howard, one of the most charming and amiable men London has seen, described it to me, and I have often thought of his words when recalling those years before the Great War when we were all dancing and enjoying ourselves in the drawing-rooms of Belgravia and Mayfair, without any idea that war might really come one day and sweep away, not only the people whom we believed to be so irresistibly agreeable, but also many modern customs and habits that made London the most brilliant capital in Europe. Happy days indeed!

But now, what a change! In these post-war days London has become poor; the burden of taxes has not only robbed it of much of its former glory, but has driven Society into economies where formerly were splendour and magnificence. London has been invaded by *nouveaux riches* who, heedless of rebuffs, have pushed their way into those sacred precincts

Victorian Days

which hitherto princes have held it an honour to be permitted to enter. Furthermore, women have become emancipated. Not only do they indulge in politics and business, but side by side with this endeavour they rush into coarse and brutal flirtations and have themselves become impervious to criticism. Men, too, have lost their refinement. The world has learned how to kill, with the result that in default of enemies to slay, it slaughters the reputations of its neighbours.

It is doubtful whether the London of the past, that London which reached the pinnacle of its social importance towards the end of last century, will ever revive. For one thing, the traditions that of old were transmitted by father to son, and by mother to daughter, no one among the younger generation would ever consent to revive. Certain features, too, of the London of the days of Victoria and Edward VII are as surely dead as the old custom of holding drawing-rooms at Buckingham Palace in the middle of the day, with ladies appearing at them in feathers and veils, trains and furbelows. All this etiquette has gone and, with its disappearance, part of the interest which formerly was attached to a London season has departed. Old people grumble at this change, though the young ones rejoice; but perhaps even these young ones will feel amused and interested in reading how things were done in Victorian and Edwardian days, and how people comported themselves in that seemingly remote period.

It is with this idea in my mind that I now write

Those I Remember

of the British capital thirty years ago and of the people at that time who moved about in its fashionable, political, intellectual and artistic spheres.

In the early years of the reign of Queen Victoria, life in London was, of course, quieter, more sedate and devoid of the hurry of to-day. The so-called London season began with Easter and lasted until the end of July, when, after the Goodwood meeting, people left *en masse* for the country and Scotland, where, after August 12th—a day upon which Parliament religiously ended its work for the year—politicians repaired in search of fresh air and grouse shooting. There was no winter season; travelling abroad was the exception rather than the rule. From October, when what was called the Long Vacation of the Law Courts came to an end, down to April, London was almost a desert, except for the presence of professional men, lawyers, doctors, and a few people whose means did not allow them to have a country house of their own.

But with the development of railways, the frequent visits of foreigners to England, the increased facilities for travelling on the Continent, and the influence of Edward, then Prince of Wales, existence in London underwent a considerable change, and from being one of the dullest cities in Europe became its gayest capital. People began to come to London in search of amusement, just as women went to Paris in search of pretty clothes. One must not forget, however, that in using the word “people” I have in my mind exclusively the Upper Ten, who

Edward VII

before the war constituted this international society that always felt at home, no matter where it was, provided it remained in the drawing-rooms of its members.

The fall of the Third Empire had robbed "gay Paree" of much of its charm and grandeur; Berlin was always solemn and dull; Vienna was too exclusive and too stupid; St. Petersburg was too far off to attract the idle; Rome had not yet become a world capital; but London, easily reached from everywhere: London with its parks, palaces, clubs and stately mansions of the great: London which basked in the sun of a Court which, being that of the heir-apparent and not that of the Sovereign, had none of the stiffness inseparable from the latter's surroundings.

Perhaps even without the war London society would not have remained exactly what it was towards the close of last century. Already during the short reign of Edward it had altered. The King had tried to shake off a few of his old associations, and on his accession to the Throne had considered it to be his duty to show himself a serious man, as well as a clever politician, whom circumstances over which he had no control had hitherto kept in the background. In a certain sense he succeeded, and perhaps if he had lived longer he would have become really dull, which, as Prince of Wales, he only was occasionally.

No one knows what the influence of King George and Queen Mary would have been if no war had come to trouble their serenity. It is not likely that, left

Those I Remember

to themselves and without the stimulant of a great catastrophe, they would have become so popular as they are to-day; but they would always have been respected, and perhaps, in a certain sense, they would have revived at their Court the old Victorian atmosphere, about which such fun was made by the late King's friends. They both have something Victorian about them; but nevertheless they would never have been able to imbue English society with the dignity which it possessed in "grandmother's" time, and which it lost when motors became the fashion, and cigarette smoking patronized more by ladies than even by men.

People who did not know London in the 'nineties will probably feel surprised when they read that in spite of the retirement in which she lived, the personality of Queen Victoria was the one that exercised the greatest influence over the society of the British capital. This influence, which was but seldom acknowledged, was nevertheless a dominant factor in many points. For example, it greatly affected the position of people who had been divorced. The fact that a divorced woman could no longer be received at Court was one which could not be overlooked among the Upper Ten, and it restrained a few enterprising persons who would have been very glad to change their names for more brilliant ones. But the old Queen was invariably inflexible in her determination not to receive women whose names had figured in the Divorce Court, whether favourably or unfavourably.

Victoria, a Martinet

The old Queen was a martinet politically as well as socially, but she had become an institution, and as such she was feared, respected, and obeyed to a wonderful degree, especially by her own children. She had always treated them from the queenly more than from the motherly point of view, and they had never been able to divest themselves of a salutary dread of her and of the very frank remarks which she never hesitated to make whenever they were themselves guilty of something which displeased her.

The Prince of Wales, afterwards King Edward VII, especially stood in fearing awe of his parent, and when almost an old man himself he hardly ever dared open his mouth in her presence. Her eldest daughter, the late Empress Frederick of Germany, used to say that whenever she was summoned to the Queen's presence she first asked for a glass of water to drink so as to conquer her emotion. It was only after her own accession to the Throne that she found herself treated as an equal by Victoria, who then, and only then, showed her affection for her eldest child.

The only person who at last overcame her timidity before Victoria was the Princess Beatrice, an extremely clever and intelligent woman, who had made herself indispensable to her mother, and who at last had a good deal to say in regard to the interior arrangements of the Royal Household, as well as the government of the country. She was the only person, outside her Ministers, with whom the Queen discussed public affairs.

The Queen, in her way, was just as much imbued

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with the sense of her own importance as was the Prince of Wales, and she was never satisfied when she had to delegate her authority, even in the most trivial matters. Furthermore, she had little sense of humour. The story of her having withered an unfortunate man who had ventured to relate a funny anecdote during a dinner at Windsor Castle to which he had been bidden, by the crushing remark, "We are not amused," is well known, but there are plenty of other instances of how she could not see a joke, nor appreciate a free pleasantry.

But though at times she could be so severe, the Queen was exceedingly kind-hearted, too much so in fact, because sometimes her solicitude for strangers had rather embarrassing results.

When the Duke of Connaught was married, the Queen arranged a long programme of the festivities, which included a state dinner on the evening of the arrival of the wedding party. It had been settled, among other things, that Prince Frederick Charles of Prussia, the father of the bride, was to appear in the uniform of his Red Zieten Hussars, which Victoria had never seen, and she laid special stress on this point. But as the Prince proceeded to dress for the banquet, what was his dismay when it was discovered that the most indispensable part of his attire had been forgotten! The Duke of Connaught was called into consultation, and it was decided that it would never do to disappoint the Queen, and that the missing pair of garments had to be found, no matter how. The Prince had an aide-de-camp, and

Frederick Charles of Prussia

he decided to borrow the necessary clothes from him, telling him that he would have to declare himself ill and to remain in his room for the time.

Frederick Charles appeared in due course, arrayed in the magnificent uniform about which Victoria had been so curious. Unfortunately he happened to be very stout, while his aide-de-camp was tall and slender, and consequently he felt most uncomfortable in his borrowed splendour. Nevertheless he made a brave show, but could not enjoy his dinner in the very least, so that at last the Queen remarked on his lack of appetite, and expressed the hope that he did not feel any ill effects from his sea journey. The Prince seized the opportunity and replied that he was not ill himself, but was worried about his aide-de-camp, who had suffered very much from the bad crossing, and he begged the Queen to allow him to go and see the unfortunate man when the meal was over. Victoria graciously acquiesced, but at the same time gave one of the gentlemen in attendance strict instructions as to what was to be done in regard to the invalid's comfort, and recommended that he should not be allowed to eat anything for the next twenty-four hours, as a total abstention from food was the best cure for sea-sickness. The Queen's orders could not be disobeyed, and in consequence the unfortunate Captain von X was left without food until the Duke of Connaught took pity upon him and in great secret smuggled him something to eat.

Prince Frederick Charles telegraphed to a military tailor in London and ordered a pair of breeches,

Those I Remember

and so the incident came to an end, but was remembered with great hilarity for a long time after by those who had witnessed it.

Victoria had as her principal characteristic an immense dignity. Her whole bearing showed it; her manner was so absolutely regal that it could not fail to impress the crowds. Her very kindness, and she was invariably kind in her way of greeting the people who were presented to her, had something royal about it. Her voice, which had a beautiful intonation, had, nevertheless, a note of command in it. With all her imperiousness, however, she had a great deal of sympathy for others, and whenever she thought that her people were in trouble she was the first to go to them with words of comfort. She had a wonderful talent for striking the right chord in that respect, and her heart was always in the proper place, ready to respond to sympathy offered or needed.

If at the beginning of her reign she had not been popular, she became in her old age the idol of the nation, and she knew it and enjoyed it more than was suspected by her family.

She loved England, and she was proud of it: proud of being its Queen, proud of its prosperity and convinced of its stability. Victoria was a great Sovereign, even in her mistakes and in her failings, and posterity will award her a place which perhaps will be more important even than she herself considered it during the long years of her prosperous reign.

Victoria's Personality

The Queen could be sarcastic sometimes, though in a mild, soft way, which would have been even more witty had she possessed the slightest sense of humour. For instance, one day the Princess Louise asked her whether it was true that the old Duchess of Cleveland, the mother of Lord Rosebery, who had been one of her bridesmaids, had been really the lovely woman tradition claimed, but which people who saw her in her old age refused to believe could have been the case. "Yes, my dear," replied Victoria, "it is true, but it lasted only a moment."

Although so much has been said of Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, and despite the rivers of ink that have been allowed to flow in the singing of his praises and the disparagement of his character, there are some features of his temperament which, for various reasons, have been allowed to remain undiscussed. It is in the study of these that one can come to a more or less correct appreciation of the man. So long as Queen Victoria was alive the position of the Prince of Wales was quite a secondary one, and it is not difficult to realize the impatience he must have felt sometimes at being treated as a little boy when he was already several times a grandfather.

Yet—and this must be told to his credit—he never allowed himself to take part in intrigues against his mother or her government, and he did not set up a party in opposition to her, as so many heirs-apparent placed in his position might have done. He had an inordinate respect for the dignity of the Crown in

Those I Remember

the line of succession to which he stood, and under the rule of the Queen he would no more have tolerated a rebellion against it than he would have permitted it against himself as King.

In spite of the natural feeling of disappointment he must have felt at seeing himself kept outside politics of which he was so fond, and in the handling of which he believed himself to be so capable, he refrained from expressing it in public, but maintained in every respect a correct attitude towards the authority of his mother, never considering himself as anything but her obedient subject.

He knew very well that the Queen was sometimes very angry with him; but when she called him to her to admonish him severely, which she occasionally did, he listened to her in silence and accepted her rebukes most submissively, although he rarely admitted that he could be in the wrong.

So long as Queen Victoria was alive the Prince of Wales remained and was kept so entirely aside of the affairs of the government that some people wondered how he would ever be able to give up the careless existence he had been leading when it fell to him to take up the arduous duties of a Sovereign. Nobody, not even his most intimate friends, suspected that he had contrived to keep in very close touch with the policies of the day, and that he had most firm ideas as to the line of policy he was going to pursue when at last power would be in his hands. This policy was entirely based on his sympathies and antipathies, but it was a policy, all the same, which

Edward the Man

aimed first of all to deliver England from the "splendid isolation" of which she was so proud. Albert Edward aspired to play a great part in all the complications of the world, complications which in a certain measure he helped to bring about by the decided help which he gave to the French instincts of *revanche*, such being entirely in accord with his own feelings of distrust of the German Kaiser.

The King prided himself on being a Parisian, and nothing pleased him more than to be told that such was the case. Yet he had nothing of the real Parisian about him, and even his smartness was more British than French. He always looked a foreigner when he was in France, and it was as a foreigner that he looked upon it, though he probably would have felt very angry had anyone dared to hint this to him. There was about him something of the accomplished man of the world, which he undoubtedly was, but there was nothing of the royal dignity which had characterized every movement of his mother, though the latter had never been desirous of being considered smart or elegant.

Edward was both, perhaps even more smart than elegant, and there was not a better dressed man in the whole of Europe. He introduced many changes in London society, among others the attendance of women at races, country-house visits during the week-end, a constant desire for locomotion, love for motor-cars, affection for gambling whether on a small or on a large scale, and the introduction of foreigners in general, and Americans in particular, into those

Those I Remember

inner circles of English society which were supposed to be inaccessible to those who had not had the advantage of being born in them. He had also developed among his friends love for French cooking, appreciation of other wines than heavy port, and admiration for pretty women. He was an admirable host, and the house parties which he used to give at Sandringham House were always pleasant in spite of a certain amount of stiffness inseparable from the Prince's lack of a sense of humour. But the grace and charm of the Princess of Wales made up for all that was wanting in her spouse, and her graciousness made him appear to greater advantage than perhaps he deserved.

Americans had always been welcome at Marlborough House as well as at Sandringham, and American ladies were always favourites with the Prince in the days when he was heir to the Throne; they continued to be so after he had become a Sovereign. He liked their vivacity, their pluck, their go; he appreciated the frankness of their conversations and the fearlessness of their remarks. But sometimes he got angry with them if they attempted to become familiar. The incident with the young American girl, who during a dinner managed to introduce a piece of ice between his neck and his collar, is well known, and the way in which he rebuked her for what he described as "an insolence" had nothing reserved about it.

The ladies who comprised the particular set of the Prince of Wales were, among others, the Duchess

Club Life

of Manchester, later on Duchess of Devonshire, Lady Cadogan, Mrs. Langtry, Mrs. Cornwallis West, Lady Brooke, and later on Mrs. George Keppel. They constituted his circle and were always seen in his company, or rather he was always seen in that of one or two of them. As for the men, there were Lord Suffield, Christopher Sykes, a Pole who called himself Count Jarochinsky, and a few diplomats such as Mr. Boulatzel, of the Russian Embassy, the Chevalier de Correo, Brazilian Minister, and the ever young and fascinating Marquis de Soveral, than whom no more charming man existed, who among his intimate friends went by the name of the Blue Monkey.

There were also a few others, but the people I have here referred to were the principal of those who in a certain sense were the inseparable companions of the Heir-Apparent.

Club life had a warm supporter in the Prince of Wales, and one could meet him almost every day when he was in London at the Marlborough, which he had founded together with a few of his friends, and where he felt absolutely at home, more so in fact than in his own house. But even there he resented most bitterly any attempt to treat him otherwise than with profound deference and respect, and his oft-repeated assurance that he considered himself only as an ordinary member and did not wish others to think him otherwise, was not always in accord with certain reproofs which he addressed to one or two Guardsmen who had presumed on the fact and not

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altogether shown themselves as respectful of his presence as he considered they should have done.

As soon as the Prince of Wales became a Sovereign he applied himself to conquer those among the crowned heads of Europe in whom he considered that he could find dupes in the guise of admirers. His numerous attempts to bring about a *rapprochement* with Russia finally won the latter Power, and induced it to further his political plans, though some of them were linked with the humiliation of the then Russian Empire. His constant coquetries with France did away at last with the old Anglo-French distrust and former antagonism, and the precaution he took to fill with his nieces the principal thrones of Europe was a revival of the old system of political alliances consolidated by marriage ties. He became the uncle of the Tsar of Russia, of the King of Spain, the Crown Prince of Roumania, the King of Greece, the Sovereigns of Norway and Denmark, and of the Crown Prince of Sweden. The only one of his nephews he had not taken to his heart was the Kaiser, but, to be sure, there were sufficient reasons for this.

One of those within the circle of Edward's acquaintance was Baron Hirsch, of whom a neat anecdote is told. When he arrived in Paris from the Balkans, where he had amassed most of his enormous fortune in a railway for which he had obtained a concession from the Sultan, he had tried to fight his way into Parisian society, and as a preliminary to have his name put up as member in the Club of the Union, one of the most select of

Baron Hirsch

the French capital. He was, however, black-balled by a huge majority. He said nothing about it, but quietly entered into secret negotiations with the owner of the house occupied by the club and bought it. He then gave notice to the club to evacuate within three months. The consternation caused by this *coup de théâtre* can be imagined. After much consultation it was decided to send an ambassador to the baron with offers of peace and the promise to admit him to the august assembly, an offer which, after a suitable interval of suspense, he finally accepted. But though he paid his club fees regularly he never set his foot in its rooms, and felt entirely satisfied with what one of the wittiest men in Paris, the Marquis de Gallifet, called the "cleverest revenge Israel had ever taken for a Christian's insult."

From the first day that Alexandra of Denmark, Princess of Wales, and later Queen of England, set her foot on British shores she became the favourite of the nation. Few people have ever had her charm, her loveliness, her grace and kindheartedness. Good, gentle, dignified, amiable, a model among wives and mothers, never a voice has been raised against her or in disparagement of her virtues and accomplishments. At times she must have had a trying life, but she is a type of those princesses of old, serene, pure and proud, who, seated upon an ivory chair, looked down upon the passions of the crowd with calm disdain and the consciousness of never having shared them.

Over London society—as Princess and Queen—

Those I Remember

she exercised a remarkable influence, because everybody was anxious to please her and to win a smile of recognition. She was never heard to utter an ill-natured remark, and she never allowed others to be ill-natured in her presence. At the same time she kept extremely well informed of all that went on in London society, and she knew how to make people who displeased her conscious of the fact. Everybody loved her. Queen Victoria always considered this particular daughter-in-law the perfection of womanhood, and invariably agreed with her except upon one point, and this was a very sore one with the old lady. Alexandra had been the first woman in England to adopt the style of wearing the hair cut short in front and curled. When she appeared in this new coiffure the Queen gasped and could not refrain from expressing her disapproval, but she found that the Princess could show herself exceedingly firm; nothing would make her return to the old-fashioned manner of hair-dressing dear to her mother-in-law's heart, and the latter, with sorrow, saw all the other Royal Princesses follow the fashion thus set. London society hastened to imitate them, until at last there came a day when at a particular Drawing Room a few old dowagers were the only ones with the smooth bandeaux which the Prince Consort had liked so much, and which had, among other advantages, that of making their wearers appear ten years older than they really were. The Queen covered her eyes with her hands and declared that the world must have gone crazy, since even *her* commands in regard to such a simple matter

Influence of Alexandra

as the dressing of women's tresses could not, or would not, be obeyed.

Several other fashions were introduced by the Princess of Wales, among which were the wearing of high bodices on occasions when previously low ones had been the rule; dog collars of pearls and other precious stones entirely covering the neck and coming up almost to the ears of their fair owners; and short skirts for walking purposes. Alexandra was always admirably dressed, and her frequent visits to Paris to consult leading dressmakers had considerably improved her taste.

After the death of her eldest son, the Duke of Clarence, which was followed a few weeks later by the equally sad passing of Colonel Oliver Montagu, the greatest friend of the then Princess of Wales, the latter was so completely broken down that she vowed never again to wear colours, and for a long time—until the day when she became Queen, in fact—she went about in severe black, only enlivened by grey or pale mauve on certain festive occasions, and even later she rarely was seen in anything but white or neutral tints.

Alexandra kept her good looks to an extraordinary degree, and on her coronation day, when she was nearer sixty than fifty, she still was declared the most beautiful woman among all who crowded Westminster Abbey on that memorable occasion.

The Princess of Wales had some wonderful moments when the whole sweetness of her disposi-

Those I Remember

tion and character shone in a particularly beautiful light: the two illnesses, for example, to which her husband nearly succumbed—the typhoid fever which brought him near to death's door while still a young man, and the operation he had to undergo on the eve of the day which had been set for his coronation. On both occasions the devotion shown by Alexandra was beyond praise. No trained nurse ever showed herself more zealous or attentive to a patient than did the gracious lady whom Albert Edward had made his wife, and whose affection perhaps he did not requite as well as he ought to have done—a fact of which he was himself aware when on his death-bed he took her hand and said: “You are the only one I regret leaving behind me.”

The other members of the Royal Family, whom one used to see about town in the season, were the Duke and Duchess of Connaught, the Princesses Christian of Schleswig-Holstein, and Louise of Argyll. The two latter were extremely fond of society, enjoying nothing better than being out to dine or dance.

Princess Louise was the prettiest among the Queen's daughters, and perhaps the most popular. She was extremely clever, even witty; liked nothing better than to meet interesting people; was a great, almost an omnivorous reader; and did not disdain gossip provided it was conducted in a ladylike way. She had inherited her mother's extraordinarily musical voice; indeed, one could almost fancy one heard her mother when the Princess Louise talked

The Marquis of Lorne

away, in that bright manner for which she was famous among her friends and admirers.

The Marquis of Lorne, whom Princess Louise married, had read a great deal and could discuss many things with skill and knowledge, but for all that he was, and remained until the end of his life, an unmitigated bore, and no one can understand how his vivacious wife had been able to put up with him. People who knew him well complained that whenever they spoke with him he invariably sent them to sleep; one day a terrible thing happened. The Princess had asked a few friends to dinner, among others a certain Duchess whose high rank entitled her without any doubt to go down to table on her host's arm. Now the lady in question had an intimate friend called the Marchioness of Z, who, as herself, had the honour of frequently enjoying the hospitality of the Marquis and of his charming wife. This friend, who had also received an invitation to this particular meal, wrote to her saying that she hoped they would meet at the dinner in question, because the presence of her, the Marchioness, would ensure the writer not being taken down to dinner by the host, to be bored to death by his dull conversation. Now as fate would have it, Lady Z, before she sealed her letter, made a mistake and put it into the wrong envelope, sending it to the Princess Louise in place of the note in which she had declared herself highly honoured by having been asked by the latter to partake of her Royal hospitality. One may imagine what followed. Louise, whose principal virtue was not that of indulgence, became

Those I Remember

furious and vowed she would never again speak to the unfortunate Marchioness ; but her husband, who was of a more philosophical turn of mind, took the matter with perfect equanimity, merely remarking to his exasperated wife : “ Well, my dear, she only said what everybody who knows me thinks. I am perfectly aware that I am a bore. Why get angry when you hear the truth ? ”

In spite of his dullness, the Marquis of Lorne made an excellent husband to his Royal and lively wife.

The Duchess of Albany, the widow of Queen Victoria's youngest son, kept herself entirely secluded from the world so long as her mother-in-law was alive, as the Queen considered that every widow ought to spend her time in mourning her beloved departed, to expiate the impossibility of dying with him. The old lady was adamant in regard to this point, and she did not consider that it was hardship for a young girl of twenty-two, which her daughter-in-law hardly was when she lost the Duke of Albany, to be expected to spend the rest of her life in weeds, a cap and tears. There was a time when the Duchess would have given a good deal to be allowed to marry again, and it was whispered that she looked with very tender eyes upon a certain brilliant nobleman whose country estate was not far from Claremont House. The Queen, however, sent for the unfortunate Duchess, to whom she gave such a severe talking-to that the latter accepted the inevitable, and settled down to an existence which at last pleased her so much that she became fat and heavy and apathetic,

Duchess of Albany

and ended by enjoying nothing so much or so well as a good dinner.

This tendency to stoutness at last alarmed the friends of the Duchess of Albany, who tried to persuade her that she ought to do something in order to reduce her weight. She pleaded that it was a family tendency, and that her two sisters—the Queen-Mother Emma of the Netherlands and the Princess of Bentheim—had both a degree of corpulence which even surpassed her own. Her doctor prescribed a course of dieting after which, he assured her, she would feel better and younger than she had been for years. The Duchess sighed but said she would submit, and courageously began her cure. After six weeks of it she was weighed, and to the consternation of her attendants it was discovered that instead of losing she had added alarmingly to her weight. The doctor was nearly frantic, when, suddenly, it struck him to ask his patient whether she had by any chance partaken of food between meals.

“Of course I have,” replied the Duchess. “Your prescription said that I must abstain from eating more than a certain quantity at meals. I never supposed that it also referred to between meals. . . .”

“And so you have eaten at odd times?” asked the miserable physician. “May I ask of what you have partaken at such times?”

“Oh, just a few little things—fruit, one or two dozen cakes a day, and a few cups of warm chocolate; nothing else. Why? Was it too much?”

There was one house in London where the hos-

Those I Remember

pitality surpassed every other, and this was White Lodge, in Richmond Park, where the delightful Princess Mary, Duchess of Teck, the mother of the present Queen, resided. She was one of those Princesses whose existence would reconcile even the most ferocious and rabid of Socialists to the principle of Royalty. Charitable, kind, good, with that genuine goodness which is as rare as it is attractive, she was a woman in a thousand, whose popularity has never been equalled.

Queen Victoria was extremely fond of this cousin and of her whole family ; she had always been desirous of seeing one of her grandsons win for his wife the graceful Princess May, the only daughter of the Duchess of Teck, and it was principally due to her efforts that at last this desirable event took place.

The Duchess of Teck's receptions were about the pleasantest entertainments of the London season. The hostess had something nice to say to every one, always an amiable word with which to put at ease. And she had a real talent for relating amusing stories. In this respect she did not resemble the other members of the Royal House.

CHAPTER III

GLIMPSES AT COURT

AFTER her widowhood Queen Victoria had entirely retired from the world. In consequence Court entertainments were few and far between. Drawing Rooms, however, were held by the Queen in person, and constituted about the only opportunity the general public had to see its Sovereign. Nobody cared for these Drawing Rooms, which were different from the Courts introduced by King Edward. The very hour at which they were held added an element of unpopularity because very few women look well in low dresses, feathers and diamonds at two o'clock in the afternoon, and a whole day spent under harness, as it were, became very trying. Yet, in spite of all these drawbacks, the feminine elements of London society would never have forgone their opportunities of making their bow to the Queen, and when she deputed one of her daughters, or the Princess of Wales, to take her place, the attendance was never half so large as when it was known that she would be there in person to accept the presentations of the young girls or young married women desirous to take their place in society by the mere fact of having been granted the *entrée* to Buckingham Palace.

Drawing Rooms were supposed to begin at two o'clock ; at least it was on the stroke of that hour that

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the Queen entered the Throne Room ; but from noon a long string of carriages wended their way to the Palace. The lucky people who had the *entrée* were driven to a separate door, which enabled them to make their way into the apartment adjacent to the Throne Room long ahead of the general throng. These comprised Ambassadors and staff, other members of the *Corps Diplomatique* and foreigners of distinction, together with Court officials and their wives and a few other privileged individuals.

The Queen took her stand in front of the Throne with the members of the Royal Family next to her, and after the procession had been opened by the wife of the Foreign Secretary, who presented the ladies of the *Corps Diplomatique*, the rest of the company passed before her in more or less orderly fashion.

Sometimes the spectacle was most amusing and varied. Though the Queen insisted that certain rules in the matter of dress should be strictly adhered to, yet there were always æsthetic ladies, eager to produce a sensation, who came out in most wonderful garments, supposed to be artistic, but in reality more or less appalling. It also happened that tiaras which had not been fastened well enough on the heads of their wearers, showed a tendency to move to the right or to the left, giving to these wearers a rather rakish look, reminding one of the famous tower of Pisa. Trains, though always of the regulation length, because this was a rule which, like the laws of the Medes and Persians, could not be altered, yet some-

At a Drawing Room

times exhibited trimmings of a startling nature, such as, for instance, one day a lady, who I hasten to say was a newcomer in London society and possessed a big bank book which had opened the doors for her, appeared in a pale pink dress and train upon which two peacocks of natural size and colour had been embroidered. Peacock number one rested its beak on its owner's bosom, while its feet were lost in the flounces ornamenting the bottom of her skirt; and peacock number two was spreading out its tail on the train accompanying this skirt. It was all very wonderful, must have been very expensive, and, of course, produced an immense sensation!

There was always a great display of fine jewels on such occasions, and family diamonds, generally kept securely hidden in bank vaults, came out of their seclusion. But, alas! I am sorry to say that many ornaments which owed their origin to Parisian workshops were worn as true and genuine, just as if they had hailed from Golconda. Now and then a trinket of that particular kind was lost, and, of course, found the next day, but . . . never claimed.

There were generally three Drawing Rooms every season, which were followed by two State Concerts and two State Balls. The latter were very magnificent and afforded a glorious sight, though at that time the ballroom was not at all the beautiful thing it became under the reign of King Edward, when he re-arranged Buckingham Palace with such consummate taste and skill. It was a long, rather dark apartment at one end of which was an *estrade*

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for the Royal Family, who sat on it in solemn silence and dignity, and on both sides of it were chairs for the members of the Diplomatic Corps and the Duchesses of the Realm. These were the privileged people who were supposed to have the right to look at humbler beings from the height of their comfortable seats, and no one else would have dared to invade these sacred precincts. Once only was their privacy intruded upon, and this happened when a lady, one of those professional beauties whose fame brightened the last years of the Victorian era, was enterprisingly ignorant enough to push her way on the Duchesses' bench, and, to the general consternation, seat herself there. The august ladies looked and gasped, and at last the old Duchess of Cleveland, who was then alive, got up majestically and, marching to the intruder, questioned her right to occupy so exalted a position. The lady in question did not budge, but, looking at the Duchess with supreme contempt: "What right have I to be here?" she asked. "Why, the right my beauty gives me to exhibit it wherever I think best!" The Duchess very nearly collapsed, but thought it wiser not to insist. The professional beauty, however, satisfied with the effect she had made, vacated the place of her own accord, guessing rightly that certain functionaries were preparing to cause her to vacate it with less than gentle persuasion.

The State Concerts were appallingly dull functions, so dull, indeed, that I often wondered why the Queen so persistently refused to give them up. Their only redeeming feature was their shortness, which

At Marlborough House

permitted those who had been bidden to them to enjoy a nice little supper at some hotel or at the house of a friend before going to bed. But they had been introduced on the programme of the amusements of the London season by the late Prince Consort, and, of course, his widow would not hear of suppressing them.

The Queen herself never appeared at either Concert or Ball, but sometimes she would condescend to show herself at a garden party given by the Prince and Princess of Wales at Marlborough House, as, for instance, the one which took place on the occasion of the marriage of the present King and Queen. She used to arrive late, and was driven round the grounds in a little pony-carriage beside which her children dutifully walked, talking with her the whole of the time, for Queen Victoria was not above a bit of gossip, and liked from time to time to be told the news of the day, especially if it dealt with the marriage of somebody she knew or the love affairs of someone she had met.

At this particular garden party the personage who attracted the most attention was the Russian Heir, who later on became the unfortunate Tsar Nicholas II; it was his first visit to London. He had been sent to represent his parents at the marriage of the Duke of York, and was the subject of great interest, as talk of his probable engagement with the granddaughter of the Queen, the Princess Alice of Hesse, was already going about. Whether on that account, or because she really liked him, Victoria was

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profuse in her courtesies toward the future Emperor of All the Russias, and shut her eyes to movements which in another person would have immediately aroused her ire. The young Grand Duke at that time, for instance, was still very much under the influence of a Polish dancer, to whom he was warmly attached. The dancer in question, unknown to Nicholas, had followed him to London; but when he found this out he used to visit her almost every time he had a spare moment. Of course the fact became known to the police, who caused the Queen to be informed and asked to intervene. It was suggested that the Prince of Wales might be the person to speak to his nephew Nicholas upon this delicate subject, but Victoria decidedly refused to entrust her son with the mission, and declared that she would rather speak herself to the young man. Courage, however, failed her at the last moment. She sent for Monsieur de Staal, the Russian Ambassador, and after having informed him of what was going on, she pathetically added:

“Of course the Grand Duke must be warned that he had better advise Mlle.—what is her name, by the way?—Mlle. to leave London; but please, please, my dear Ambassador, do it mildly, very mildly. . . .”

Monsieur de Staal was a charming man and a distinguished diplomat of the old school who had made himself immensely popular in London, as did his amiable wife and their altogether delightful daughter. I have seldom met anyone gifted with such a deft

Queen of Denmark

quality of tact or who could say more pleasantly an unpleasant thing. Added to this accomplishment he had a wonderful sense of humour, and was never at a loss in any situation. He was altogether an ideal Ambassador and would have made an ideal Minister for Foreign Affairs, a position which he always refused to accept. He was very fond of his own comfort; as he once tersely put it, he "did not care to have to mix himself up in the troubles of the whole of the world."

The de Staals did not often entertain, but when they did, things were done really well, and Chesham House in Chesham Place, as the Russian Embassy was called, became the scene of gorgeous festivals. At the time of the Duke of York's marriage almost all the Royalties of Europe appeared there during a reception at which the King and Queen of Denmark were the guests of honour. Queen Louise was the object of great interest as her visits to London were not frequent, and also because she was the mother of the popular and beloved Princess of Wales. She was quite deaf, but this did not prevent her from talking with the people presented to her just as if she had understood their replies to her questions, and she had a great, grand manner in all her movements which was extremely majestic but with no trace of hauteur. Her children treated her with immense respect, and it was a pretty sight to watch the care and tenderness which the Princess of Wales lavished upon her mother, as well as the deferential manner with which she listened to her, at times, impatient

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remarks. Louise had a sharp tongue and knew how to use it, often to her own children's discomfort, and she was more or less a tyrant in her family circle. But she was extremely loved by all its members notwithstanding, probably because they all knew the warm interest with which she followed their movements and her utter devotion to them. She was also an extremely intelligent woman, the only one of whom Prince Bismarck stood in awe, and her influence over her son-in-law, the late Tsar Alexander III of Russia, was unbounded. He had absolute confidence in her and in her judgments, consulting her when he would have scorned asking the advice of his Ministers. Many people who knew her well have said that if she had been alive in 1914 the Great War would never have taken place.

But every great man has his failings, and every woman her weak side, and Louise, Queen of Denmark, had hers. Her taste in dress was atrocious, the despair of her daughters, who were considered the best dressed women in Europe, the greatest *élégantes* of their time. They sighed every time they saw their mother appear with a more or less outrageous cap, or a dress utterly unsuitable to her age and figure; and on the occasion of this London visit, in order to be present at their grandson's marriage, the Princess of Wales and the Empress Marie of Russia had exchanged any amount of letters the object of which was how to persuade their mother to buy herself really becoming clothes. At last it was decided that the two sisters would order

A Plot that Failed

for her some dresses from a famous Paris milliner and offer them to her as a present. The thing was done, and the Queen professed herself delighted with them when they were presented to her. The Princess of Wales sighed with satisfaction; she had been fearful of a family scene, and wrote to the Empress that things were going on quite well and their mother in no danger to produce a sensation with German-made frocks, because, this must be added, Louise was very faithful to her old friends and insisted on a dress-maker in Kiel—where she had lived for quite a long time before her husband had succeeded to the throne of Denmark—continuing to make her frocks. One may therefore imagine the stupefaction and dismay of Alexandra when, at this particular reception at the Russian Embassy, she saw her mother enter the room attired in a terrible raspberry-coloured satin, trimmed with a darker shade of red fringe, which probably had been very expensive but was just as hideous. “Oh, mother!” she exclaimed. “Why did you not put on one of the dresses which I and Mimi”—the pet name of the Empress Marie—“gave you?”

“But, my dear, this is just as nice,” replied the Queen, “and I had it made specially for my London visit. Your gowns are all right, and they will do quite well for next season’s receptions in Copenhagen; but, you see, this was made expressly for the present occasion!” She was decidedly a martinet.

It was not often that Queen Louise deigned to visit a foreign Court or to grace with her presence

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family weddings that did not take place at Copenhagen. Indeed, I think that the marriage of the then Duke of York was the only occasion upon which she departed from this habit. She was particularly fond of this grandson of hers, in whom her own strong common sense saw the sterling qualities which distinguish the present King of England long before the rest of the world noticed them. Born and bred as she had been in all the old traditions of Royalty, she never would admit that it could do wrong or even be anything else than wonderful in every respect, but at the same time she had her personal likes and dislikes, and once, when asked why she had not gone with the King to St. Petersburg at the time of the funeral of Alexander III, of whom she had been so fond, and the marriage of his successor, she had diplomatically replied that it was too painful for her to see, in the place of her beloved son-in-law, a young man so different from him in every way. The truth of the matter was that she never trusted Nicholas II, though of course she would have died rather than admit such was the fact, and she trusted the Tsarina Alix even less. On the occasion of the one and only visit the Imperial couple paid to the Court of Copenhagen after their marriage, things did not go too smoothly; at times Queen Louise had to summon all her Royal self-control not to show her impatience with her new granddaughter. When her visitors left she was heard to utter a sigh of relief and to express the hope that the rather unmanageable young Empress would find good advice in England,

Empress Alix

and hastened to write to Queen Victoria, with whom she had always been on excellent terms, to acquaint the latter of some of the even then already noticeable eccentricities of their relative, and imploring her to explain to Alix that she ought to show herself more amiable in general and more pleasant in particular towards the people she met or to whom she was introduced.

By that time Queen Victoria was already aware of the growing unpopularity of her granddaughter, and she did her best to open the eyes of the Tsarina to her own shortcomings. This did not prove at all the easy thing she had imagined, because the child whom she had partly brought up, and to whom she had always shown so much tenderness, turned round upon her grandmother and gave Victoria plainly to understand that she too was an Empress, consequently her equal, and would not stand any remarks or reproofs. Victoria gasped and was reduced to silence; but it would have been an interesting thing to read the letters which, after this famous visit of her Russian relatives, she wrote to Queen Louise of Denmark, and to know the inner thoughts of the two old ladies in regard to the girl whom chance, and in a certain sense the exigencies of politics, had raised to what was then the greatest throne in Europe, from which she was to be so tragically thrust.

Before his marriage Nicholas II had paid two long visits to England. The first one was, as I have just related, on the occasion of his cousin's wedding; the second, the year following, when he spent some

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weeks in London to be near his future wife, who was residing in a little villa on the Thames with a lady-in-waiting and one of the chamberlains of her father, the Grand Duke of Hesse. Nicholas became very fond of the British capital and liked to recall his stay there. But except on official occasions he did not show himself in society during his second visit. Some people assured me he would have liked to have done so, but was restrained by orders given to him in St. Petersburg—a rumour which we in the know did not believe. But he went several times to Windsor, and the Queen took quite a liking to him, and it is probable would have been able to influence him to his advantage and for his future good had she not found in her granddaughter an opposing element. The future Empress was excessively jealous and did not care for her future husband to become attached to her grandmother. She was far too stupid to realize the advantage it would have been for him to follow the guidance of such a wise politician as Queen Victoria, and was anxious to show to the world that she was independent of old family ties and associations, so, voluntarily or involuntarily, did her very best to create between the then Grand Duke Tsarevitch and her own English relatives as deep a gulf as possible.

An amusing incident in the English visits of the Heir to the Russian Throne was the perpetual mistaking for each other of him and the Duke of York which continually took place. The likeness was so strong that they could hardly be distinguished apart, and confusions were endless. Thus, at the garden party

Royal Doubles

at Marlborough House, a Russian lady who was one of the guests approached the Duke of York under the impression he was his cousin and began talking to him in Russian, to learn, much to her confusion, that he was not the Grand Duke Nicholas. And this though she knew her future Sovereign well. Later on, when the Duke of York visited St. Petersburg for the new Tsar's wedding, he was continually mistaken for the latter when walking, as he liked to do, in the streets of the Russian capital. It gave a lot of trouble to the police, who could not understand why their Sovereign had suddenly developed such a taste for morning constitutionals, and shadowed the English Prince until the latter had at last to notice it, and in consequence gave up his rambles rather than endure the ordeal of a small army of detectives and agents following him at every turn.

To come back to Queen Louise of Denmark, she departed from London highly enchanted with the reception she had been given and with all that she had seen. But she never repeated her visit, being too old, as she declared, to undergo its excitements. She preferred not to invade her daughter's home, as so many mothers-in-law are inclined to do, and she had behaved most tactfully in regard to the then Prince of Wales, many of whose actions she did not approve, but yet was far too wise in her generation to criticize even to her own daughter. It is to be questioned whether the married life of the present Queen-Mother Alexandra would have gone on with such smoothness as was the case on the whole if her

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mother's advice had not been always at hand to urge upon her the necessity of being conveniently blind and deaf when the occasion required it.

The Princess of Wales's relatives were always very discreet in regard to visits to England and did not at all embarrass her with too frequent and unexpected appearances on British shores. The Danish Royal Family were all models of tact and far too proud of the great position to which a Princess of their House had been promoted, on the day she had become the future Queen of England, not to try to make her path as smooth as possible.

In general there were but few official Royal visits at the British Court during the last years of the life of Queen Victoria. The Emperor Alexander II had once appeared there, to see his daughter the Duchess of Edinburgh, a few months after the latter's marriage, had been received with great pomp, entertained by the City of London, the freedom of which had been solemnly handed to him at a big luncheon at the Mansion House, and had spent one or two pleasant afternoons at Windsor Castle; but this visit had not been repeated. The Empress also had come to London to be near her daughter at the time of the birth of the latter's first child, and stayed at Buckingham Palace, where the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh had a suite of apartments.

The Empress Elizabeth of Austria also came on occasion to the Court of St. James previous to the tragic death of her only son Archduke Rudolph. She spent several hunting seasons in Ireland and also

The Empress Elizabeth

at Combermere Abbey in England, and every time she crossed the Channel she paid a visit to the Queen at Windsor. Victoria had rather a liking for her, though they were so entirely different in character as well as temperament. The Empress could be extremely pleasant and attractive whenever she chose, and she entertained a great respect for the aged British ruler, whose dignity impressed her impulsive temperament. Poor Elizabeth had had anything but a pleasant life, and in spite of the pomp and grandeur amidst which her days were spent, she had known many bitter hours. She appreciated very much the relative freedom of her life abroad, and avoided staying long in Vienna as much as possible. The Austrian aristocracy had never cared for her and she did not care for it, preferring, as she said more than once, the society of her dogs and horses to the sacred precincts of the Hofburg. A wonderful rider, she managed to excite the admiration of English sportsmen by the artistic manner in which she followed the hounds. There was one season when Bay Middleton, of famous memory, piloted her in the hunting field, and he owned later on that he had had a hard time of it, leading her over hedges and fences and trying his best not to let her run too many risks.

When in London Elizabeth generally put up at Claridge's and always refused to avail herself of the hospitality of the Queen at Buckingham Palace, where apartments were invariably put at her disposal, because, as some wicked people once said, "It was

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so certain that she would decline to use them." But, as I have told already, she never failed to spend one afternoon at Windsor.

The Empress of Austria was a curious mixture of familiarity and stiffness. She was a creature of whims; she could show herself most gracious to you one day and ignore you the next. One of her eccentricities was to sit for hours together having her beautiful hair brushed and combed. One day during her annual visit to London, the Duchess of Manchester—who was not yet the Duchess of Devonshire, and who knew her well—happened to call on Elizabeth, who, when the Duchess was announced, hastened to meet her in the sitting-room, forgetful of the fact that she was simply wrapped in the white *négligé* which was thrown over her dress whenever she fancied it was time to brush her hair, which happened several times every day. Noticing the embarrassed look of the Duchess, she remembered the carelessness of her attire and proceeded to throw off the offending wrapper. What was her dismay, and that of her guest, when the disappearance of that garment revealed Elizabeth in her simple underwear. For once she had removed her dress to have her hair attended to and had not remembered the fact.

The Shah of Persia was another Royal visitor who came to enliven a London season. There was a good deal of talk about him, and his rather curious remarks were repeated right and left, such as his exclamation, when presented to a very important lady in Court

The Shah of Persia

circles who had seen more winters than she cared to count, but who still clung to her evening dresses with their low necks and short sleeves. "*Quelle horreur!*" had exclaimed his Persian Majesty; and then turning to the husband of the unfortunate lady, he inquired: "Why don't you have her head cut off?"—to the general consternation of the listeners.

The Shah was asked to Hatfield House, where the late Lord and Lady Salisbury gave a garden party in his honour, and the many historical associations of the old mansion interested him immensely. But his hosts were on tenterhooks the whole time his visit lasted, for fear he should commit some incongruity likely to bring dismay to their other guests. However, things passed off better than had been expected, and the Persian Monarch departed delighted with everybody, especially with himself.

The late Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg-Strelitz were regular visitors to London during the season, when they occupied Mecklenburg House, which belonged to them. The Grand Duchess was the sister of the Duke of Cambridge and of the Duchess of Teck, and she had remained thoroughly English in her tastes and affections. She was a very cultured and extremely intelligent woman, but did not possess the great charm of her sister nor the latter's capacity for making friends. But she had many amiable qualities and was a Princess of the old school who never missed an occasion to say something pleasant. She cared for society, and one could

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meet her at many places and in many houses. The Grand Duke was blind, but in spite of his infirmity could enjoy the good things put within his reach. He was especially fond of music and was never so happy as when attending a concert. The couple were decidedly popular, but, somehow, no one took them seriously into account or thought of them as reigning Sovereigns. It was not a case of familiarity breeding contempt, but rather one of familiarity banishing ceremony.

Another blind relative of the Royal Family was the Landgrave of Hesse, whose brother later on married the youngest daughter of the Empress Frederick of Prussia, the Princess Margaret. The Landgrave was a real artist in his way and an extremely pleasant fellow, but the delicacy of his health prevented him from taking part in the pleasures of the London season. Nevertheless, he never failed to come to England every spring, and it was a great blessing for him that he died before the war broke out. The Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg was not so lucky, because, though far advanced in the eighties, if not the nineties, she saw the beginning of the great struggle which must have affected her terribly. In the years immediately preceding it she had been compelled to give up her visits to London on account of her infirmities, but had remained deeply attached to her niece, Queen Mary, and her last joy was when the Queen visited her in Strelitz at the time of her stay in Berlin for the marriage of the Kaiser's daughter with the Duke of Brunswick. Old as she

William II

was, the Grand Duchess had insisted on going to the station to meet the Queen, and her gratitude to the latter for not forgetting her was quite touching.

There was one visitor, however, whose appearances in England were always more or less embarrassing to his British relatives, and this was the Kaiser. He was fond of his mother's country, though he had treated that mother so badly on account of the fact that she was an English Princess, whose independence of judgment he disliked. But at the same time he pretended he had an unbounded admiration and affection for the Queen, who, strange to say, also liked him and invariably took his part whenever anyone attacked him. The old lady appreciated the deference with which this grandson treated her, a deference which sometimes she did not receive from her own children. He was clever enough to accept her advice and to submit to anything she might say to him, and she was far too straightforward and true herself to notice the artificiality of a character so clever as to mask his real intentions and so unscrupulous in putting them into execution.

The Kaiser could be very charming when he cared to take the trouble, and he cared to do so very often, because it was part of his nature to try to deceive the world as to his plans and ambitions. He set himself to persuade the Queen that when in her presence he entirely forgot that he was a great Monarch, only remembering that he had the happiness to be her grandson; and Victoria fell a victim to this subtle flattery. When she was dying the

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Emperor rushed to London to see her breathe her last; but many people doubted whether it was affection that drove him to Osborne House, where the Queen passed away, or an extreme desire to make himself important and also to watch the first steps as Sovereign of his uncle, King Edward, whom he had always hated as much as he could hate anybody.

An amusing story was told at the time, and went round certain circles supposed to be in close touch with the movements of Royalty. It seems that someone asked the Kaiser what he thought of his uncle and what kind of Monarch he expected him to be. "Oh, he is sure to make trouble for somebody or other," had replied William II. The same question was put in regard to him to King Edward, whose feelings of sympathy towards his nephew were known not to be too developed. "What does Your Majesty think about the Kaiser?" "Oh, he is sure to cause trouble in the world," was the answer.

CHAPTER IV

POLITICIANS AND AMBASSADORS OF YESTERDAY

IN the days of which I am writing there were still real statesmen in England. Mr. Gladstone and Lord Salisbury towered above all others, while the Duke of Devonshire, who had not yet succeeded to the title, and was known as the Marquis of Hartington, the Earl of Kimberley and Sir William Harcourt, were also imposing personalities.

With the disappearance of Lord Beaconsfield, however, the picturesqueness of political life in Great Britain came to an end.

By what means Dizzy had succeeded in winning the confidence and the affection of Queen Victoria, the respect of the old Tories, and the co-operation of great and haughty statesmen such as Lord Salisbury, remains to this day a mystery ; but win them he did ; and what is even more singular, none of those who had succumbed to his machinations and the marvellous dexterity of his mind ever regretted it, or believed that they had done wrong in accepting his leadership.

After Disraeli's death it was but natural that the mantle of Elijah should fall upon the shoulders of Lord Salisbury, the brilliant politician and statesman, who proved himself such a worthy successor to his great ancestor, Elizabeth's Burghley.

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The former Marquis of Salisbury, father of the present Peer, was certainly a great man as well as a great Minister. Physically as well as morally he towered far above his contemporaries, for whom he must sometimes have felt a certain sense of disdain. He held the opinion, which, alas ! hardly anyone now shares, that honesty is possible in politics, and he never in the whole course of his long life did one action for which he would have shrunk from taking full responsibility before the world.

In London, in his house in Arlington Street, or in his private room at the Foreign Office, in the House of Lords, and in his splendid home at Hatfield, Lord Salisbury remained invariably the same affable, pleasant, kind man, with a shade of condescension in his greeting, but with exquisite courtesy in the welcome which he extended to his visitors. He never lost his temper, never allowed himself to be ruffled in his politeness toward everybody. In his youth he had been accused of vehemence in his sympathies and antipathies ; but as age overtook him the weight of his great experience softened, maybe corrected, this defect.

In the days when he was still Lord Robert Cecil, a younger son without hope of succeeding to the family honours and estates, he had married the distinguished woman who was to be of such help to him in the years which were to follow. The late Lady Salisbury was in every way an ideal Peeress. When speaking with her one could not avoid the thought that no public man could have found a

Lord Salisbury

better companion than this charming, somewhat rude, but so singularly attractive lady, attractive by the strength of her mind and the vigour of her wonderfully quick intelligence—an intelligence which indeed allowed her to see at a glance the possible consequences of every step, the possible success or failure of every action. She had also a keen sense of humour which was inherited by all her children, seizing upon the funny side of life with a vivacity that was most amusing and entertaining. She never was what could be called a smart woman, and indeed the simplicity of her attire was sometimes regrettable; but she always remained a very great lady, even when her neck-wear was disarranged, or her hair brushed the wrong way.

Georgina, Marchioness of Salisbury, was in her way just as remarkable as a woman as her husband was as a man and as a politician. They were complements of each other, and when she had passed away he never recovered the vitality with which she had imbued him all through the long years of their marriage.

I recall an amusing incident which illustrates the vivacity of Lady Salisbury's mind. One day at Hatfield, where a large week-end party was assembled, the conversation drifted towards Mr. Gladstone, who, needless to say, was not altogether a *persona grata* in the Cecil family. One of the guests, with a singular lack of tact, considering whose hospitality he was enjoying, remarked that no matter what opinion people might have about Mr.

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Gladstone, no one could deny that he was a highly conscientious and right-minded man, such as without any doubt we would find in heaven when we reached that place.

“ Oh, but I shall never reach it,” exclaimed Lady Salisbury. “ I feel sure that it will be in Satan’s bosom that I shall repose in the other world, and won’t I be amused by watching how you will all be bored by such as Mr. Gladstone and the like of him in Paradise.”

I don’t know whether the Master of Hawarden ever heard of this *boutade*, but it is certain that he did not care for Lady Salisbury, whatever he may have thought of the Marquis. Being told by one of his friends that he was going to Hatfield, Gladstone remarked that he could not understand such waste of time as spending a week-end with people who would never admit that they were wrong; a most false judgment, which could far better have fitted the man who uttered it than those whom it pretended to describe, because there never existed a personage more impatient of blame and more susceptible to praise than the famous statesman.

Gladstone’s vanity had something really childish about it, and it is a great pity that this defect in his character was encouraged by all his family, as well as by his wife, until he had become in all earnest convinced of his own infallibility, not only in political matters, but also in religious and social affairs. He believed in himself; when he defended things and principles in which he had no faith, he was firmly

Mr. Gladstone

convinced that once he had taken up a cause, this cause became sacred, and ought never to be challenged.

Mr. Gladstone struck those who saw him for the first time, and who had no reason for being prejudiced either way, as one of the best comedians it was possible to meet. There was an artificiality about his individuality, and, I will even dare to suggest, about his mind, which produced at times almost a repellent impression. He moved his hands, shook his head, raised his eyes to heaven, and modulated his voice according to the effect he was desirous of obtaining, with a power of persuasion that was almost uncanny. He had studied the weaknesses of humanity with a thoroughness that reached a degree of perfection.

Gladstone's impatience at contradiction had its funny aspects, as, for instance, one day when in conversation with a young member of the House of Commons who had dared to differ from him, and to tell him so, he had exclaimed: "Young man, you do not know to whom you are speaking, or what you are saying?"

Yet with all his defects Mr. Gladstone had an innumerable number of devoted admirers who believed in him. But he was more of an opportunist than the world suspected, especially in those cases where opportunism meant for himself a political triumph, and for his party a political victory.

A feature of the personal character of Mr. Gladstone seldom touched upon by his contemporaries or

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his historians was his essentially middle-class breeding. One could never by any chance have imagined him anything else but a middle-class gentleman of means, born and reared in middle-class surroundings. All his points of view, so narrow in some ways, and so liberal in others, were middle-class; he could no more have shown the aristocratic broad-minded judgment which characterized Lord Salisbury than he could have flown in days before aeroplanes had been invented.

Mr. Gladstone's great friend was Mr. John Morley, who wrote such a wonderful life of his old chief. Mr. Morley was a very familiar figure in London drawing-rooms in the last decade of the Victorian era, and was considered to be a most charming person. It would have been difficult to meet a more brilliant talker, or a deeper thinker, and it is very much to be regretted that he did not devote himself entirely to study instead of allowing the cares of a political career to engross his attention and thoughts, to the detriment of other pursuits for which he was very much better fitted. He was a delightful companion, who with his vast erudition and knowledge had nothing pedantic about him; and even when he was conversing with an inferior he never allowed the fact to transpire, or to shake the confidence of the said inferior in his own intellectual powers.

Morley was charitable—a rare virtue nowadays—and he charitably admitted that as society is mostly composed of mediocrities, it is wiser to put oneself

John Morley

on their level, rather than quarrel with them by pointing out to others their defects. There was a shade of scepticism in his turn of mind, but this was tempered by indulgence and by a good deal of benevolence combined with disdain—the disdain of the superior soul for the meanness of its surroundings. He was modest with the modesty of the man who is aware of his personal value, and because of that does not care to parade the fact before the world. He could never have lent himself to any base political combination. Intrigue was a thing which inspired him with absolute disgust, and he absolutely refused to acknowledge that those whom he considered his friends could ever render themselves guilty of any such crime.

This leader of the agnostic movement of his day was to my mind the personification of worldly Christian charity. His attitude in that respect went far to justify Renan's famous saying that "Charity and Christianity are as far apart as belief from incredulity."

Morley, long before old age had claimed him, considered it as the happiest period of human life. He told me one day, after we had come to know each other better, it was, in his opinion, the time when "one could judge objectively of things and of people, when one had become detached from everything that was not worth the trouble of fighting for, and when distance allowed one to distinguish between the various remembrances of those experiences by which one's life had been built"—a serene

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appreciation of the inevitable transformation of all human and earthly things which probably had helped this philosopher to gaze with indulgence on the follies and mistakes of the crowds, to show himself really kind toward the errors of humanity, and in the judgments which he passed upon them. All through his extended and busy life he kept before his eyes these principles of agnostic charity which allowed him to overcome so much of the bitterness another might perhaps have felt in his place, in presence of the ingratitude of some people from whom he had the right to expect more steadfastness in their views, more fidelity to the principles which he had tried to instil into them.

Personally, Morley was continually striving to elevate himself in his moral conceptions of what was right and wrong. He may have lived according to certain ideas, he may have written according to different ones, but he had never rejected any of those which had seemed to him to approach the ideal he had created for himself. He had never wavered in any of his principles or aims, whether philanthropic, social or political, and this unity of thought, this constant effort to raise his intellect to higher regions, had given to his whole character and personality the perfect serenity which he preserved all through his long and laborious existence.

Morley's mind was more that of the artist and historian than of a politician, and it always seemed to me that with him politics had come as an after-thought. Before everything else he was a thinker,

Morley as a Moralist

a philosopher, a student of human nature, and he stood far above the compromises and daily worries which are the inevitable lot of the man who attempts to win for himself a foremost place in the political arena of his time. He was at his best in his study, not in his seat in Parliament.

And yet he was in a certain sense a Parliamentary, inasmuch as he firmly believed in the rule of the people; but of gentle, well-bred and well-educated people. He could not conceive a demagogue, and demagoguery was an abomination in his eyes, perhaps even to a stronger extent than he realized. His was far too well-ordered a brain and mind to accept or tolerate exaggerations, no matter in what camp they evolved. In this respect he reminded me sometimes of Hippolyte Taine, while at other times the similitude of his mind with that of Ernest Renan could not fail to strike anyone who had known the three men.

With it all he had a keen sense of humour, which sometimes came to the surface when one least expected it. He could see the droll side of every situation; I remember one day, when we had been discussing English politics and English statesmen, he told me that one of the best proofs of the soundness of the British Constitution was that it never allowed individuals to exalt themselves at its expense. "We have, and we shall always have, great Ministers," he added; "yet it would hardly be possible in England now for one man to rise to the height of, let us say, Richelieu, because

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Parliament would always prevent him from going too far in his ambitious aims."

"Do you think that Parliament only would do it?" I asked. "Do not you think that it would be rather because no Englishman would ever dare to attempt to make a name for himself at the expense of the Crown?"

"Oh, no," said Morley, "it is not that at all; we have had plenty of politicians who might have done it, and who have only been prevented from doing it by our Constitution."

"What do you mean?" I inquired. "I confess that I do not understand you."

"It is very simple," smiled Morley, and I will never forget his quizzical expression. "Whenever they become dangerous, our Constitution allows us to send them to the House of Lords, and . . . we hasten to do it."

He was to go there himself later on, and it has always seemed to me that, in accepting this Peerage, which was almost forced upon him, he made a bitter sacrifice to the very Constitution he had thus mildly criticized. But his transfer to the Upper House did not destroy the influence he wielded on the small group of people who had accepted his ideals. I use with intention the word "small," because I doubt whether the political leadership of Viscount Morley of Blackburn had ever had many followers. The majority did not understand the reticences of a conscience of which rectitude was the motto, and which sacrificed everything the world held dear for

Morley as a Politician

the sake of principles. And then, again, Morley, as I have told already, was an historian and a writer by taste, and became a politician only through circumstances and the necessities of life, which partly explains why his success as a statesman never reached that of men infinitely inferior to him in intelligence as well as in knowledge. In fact, politics, with their tawdry exigencies, were repugnant to him; he looked upon people, as well as upon events, from the point of view of a student of history who "reads the future in the past." He saw the far-reaching consequences of acts which his contemporaries considered supplied the need of the moment, and when he warned them against the extravagances of a chauvinist patriotism which mixed up "love of country with hankering after notoriety," as he expressed himself one day, he did it with a full knowledge of where these led England and the rest of the world.

I have mentioned the half sceptical, half kind indulgence with which Morley looked at society and the marionettes which compose it. Once as we were talking about kindness in general and from the abstract point of view, he told me that there was nothing he detested more than the old French saying, that "Whoever gives something to the poor, lends it to God." "It is the selfishness of our modern world that has given rise to this proverb," he added, "because when people do good in the expectation that it may become profitable to them, whether in this world or in the next, they do not give, they only lend. Gratitude, demanded and

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expected, seems to me to destroy the very essence of kindness, because it is kindness expended as capital on which one requires an interest. I cannot appreciate a man who does good with the feeling that he is courting reciprocity."

These words have always appeared to me to embody Morley's character better than anything which he has written, and they give in a certain sense the key to some of its peculiarities which the world at large has never been able to fathom and few have troubled to try to understand. He stood alone in so many things; he was so different from the crowd amidst which he lived, who probably would never have been able to comprehend that he prized the Order of Merit far more than the Peerage and the honours which at last were showered upon his head. But most of all he appreciated "Honest John," by which his friends will always think of him.

The last Cabinet presided over by Mr. Gladstone was undoubtedly composed of clever men, and yet it could be called a popular Cabinet. In addition to Mr. Morley, Mr. Asquith, Sir William Harcourt and Lord Rosebery were most certainly remarkable figures in the political skies of their time.

The last-mentioned was perhaps the most talked about and the best known to the man in the street, and for reasons which had nothing to do with politics. He was the son of that wonderful old lady, the Duchess of Cleveland, and the stepson of one of the wealthiest men in England; he had married a

Lord Rosebery

Rothschild who was the richest heiress in the United Kingdom, and last, but not least, he had won a Derby, which circumstance alone would have assured his popularity, even if he had not been an exceedingly amiable, charming and intellectual individual. There was a time when he was called the "luckiest man in England," for he seemed to succeed in all that he wished or attempted to do. He was, moreover, a writer of value, and a scholar who had not been content simply to lead the life of a gentleman of means, but who from the very beginning of his career had said that he meant to work seriously and to make his mark in politics. For some time he had a phenomenal rise, and then all at once his star seemed to fall, and he retired from the public scene in a most mysterious manner which caused much talk, and for reasons that have remained unknown, though conjectures without number were made at the time in regard to this sudden eclipse. It is quite possible that the death of Lady Rosebery, which happened most unexpectedly, might have been the real reason why her husband never again entertained the idea of becoming once more England's Prime Minister.

Lord Rosebery was quite charming when he took the trouble to forget for a few moments the Sphinx-like attitude which he favoured. He could prove himself an excellent talker—witty, agreeable and full of humour. His knowledge of history and literature was of wide range.

His great handicap was, perhaps, the large fortune which he acquired by his marriage. Had

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he been compelled to work for his living it is probable that he would have risen to really great heights, but because of his millions the world came to think of him as of a dilettante in politics, the last sort of reputation a statesman ought to acquire, and one which, if not lived down, will always prevent him from taking a leading part in public life. Rosebery did not take his fortune in the right spirit—I may even say that he did not take it seriously, as, for instance, the Duke of Devonshire, to whom his millions only added prestige—but he used it in a happy-go-lucky sort of way, and showed in handling it an indolence allied with carelessness that could only shock English traditions and English ideas as to how a statesman should act and live. Lord Rosebery never could show himself really attentive to his work, and as someone who knew him well once said : “He would have been a great man if he could only have won the Derby with the gravity which such a success ought to have been carried.” Lady Rosebery was a remarkable woman, and exceedingly pleasant. She was clever, and had an excellent judgment.

When the Marquis of Ripon had been asked to join the Ministry of Mr. Gladstone as Indian Secretary there had been an outcry against his appointment owing to the fact that he was not only a Roman Catholic, but, what was even worse, a convert to that faith. He was perhaps the only really Grand Seigneur among the followers of the “Grand Old Man,” not only by reason of his name, personal position and fortune, and also because of his

Marquis of Ripon

character, which was conceived on very generous lines. Lord Ripon could not have committed a mean action to save his life, and though his intelligence was not above the average, though he made more than one mistake during the course of his political career, yet no one ever uttered a criticism in regard to his personal integrity, his keen sense of humour, or the dignity which marked his life. He lived in a charming house on the Chelsea Embankment, where with Lady Ripon he used to give dinner-parties which were always interesting even when they happened to be dull, and where one met some of the most exclusive members of society, such as the Duchess of Cleveland, whose presence at an entertainment constituted an honour which surpassed by far that which even a Royal guest could confer. They belonged essentially to the old school, and they kept faithful to its traditions to the end.

One may therefore imagine what a shock it must have been to the Marquis and Marchioness when their son, Earl de Grey, married a lady who had made herself talked about a good deal more than might have been necessary, the famous Gladys Countess of Lonsdale, one of the professional beauties whose good looks had embellished the drawing-rooms of London in the 'eighties and 'nineties, and who had been one of the particular friends of the Prince of Wales, until she became that of the Princess, owing to a common love for music. Lady Lonsdale had been left a widow when barely five-and-twenty, with one little girl, who is the present

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Lady Juliet Duff. She was extremely beautiful, with splendid eyes and a superb figure, and she was a prominent person among the smartest set of English society. How she captivated Lord de Grey no one knew, and how she could make up her mind to marry him after she had been engaged several times to several most attractive fellows, among others Sir Edgar Vincent, the present Lord d'Abernon, no one understood, but marry him she did, and continued after this event to shine in London and Parisian society with a brilliance which very few women have attained, until death overtook her while still young.

Queen Alexandra was really fond of Lady de Grey, who was as intelligent as she was attractive, and who possessed tact to an uncommon degree, knowing exactly what to do or what to say, and never rendering herself guilty of any social mistake.

Mr. Asquith, previous to his marriage with the brilliant Margot Tennant, was but little known socially, though he was very much appreciated in political and legal circles. His subsequent career has proved that he is really an excellent politician as far as parliamentary tactics go, and a sincere patriot.

At first people were inclined to laugh at "H. H. A." and not to take him seriously; indeed, I was told that one evening, at a dinner given by Lady Burghclere in her beautiful house in Charles Street, old Lady Dorothy Nevill snubbed the future Premier to such an extent that she made their

Mrs. Asquith

hostess quite uneasy. But Mr. Asquith himself remained serenely unconscious of this unpleasant episode, and very likely never noticed it, because he would never have imagined that the insignificant personage he supposed himself to be could be worth a snub in general, much less one in particular from the formidable Lady Dorothy. He was a hard-working man, absolutely devoid of any sense of humour, and devoted to his duties. Miss Tennant could not have found a better husband.

In those old days of which I am writing Miss Tennant had just been brought into fame by the publication of "Dodo," the novel which was supposed to have found its heroine in her person. She was considered "a terror" even by those who liked her, and of the latter there were a good many who were sincerely amused by her complete indifference to Mrs. Grundy and the sublime unconsciousness with which she performed the most startling actions.

Before she married Mr. Asquith every third word which one heard in London society had something or other to do with her. She was perpetually on the stage, as it were—this vast stage of public appreciation from whose judgments there is rarely an appeal. Everybody feared her, everybody criticized her and repeated her *bons mots*. In a certain sense she was the court jester of London select circles, and like these functionaries of olden days, she was dreaded, more on account of the things which she liked to imply than of those she said, whenever she

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had the occasion to feel irritated with somebody or annoyed at something.

Writing about Mrs. Asquith leads one naturally to mention other persons who, like her, were members of that select circle which had called itself "Souls," and about which London had gossiped so much when it first startled society by its mutual admiration propensities. To-day the "Souls" are forgotten, or almost so, and if the truth were known very probably some among them feel heartily ashamed of having been connected with this self-appreciating and self-praising company. The "Souls" owed their existence to a whim, and to the atmosphere of general laziness which hung over London society in those years when people strove to be original because they feared they could not be interesting.

Arthur James Balfour was a "Soul," but *not* a "good one," as his uncle, Lord Salisbury, once said in jest, because in spite of his somewhat lackadaisical manners he was made for something better than the futility of this particular set of people. He had inherited from his mother a great deal of the cleverness of the Cecils, and he had some of their ambition, an ambition which was encouraged by his family, and especially by the late Lady Salisbury, who was extremely fond of this particular nephew of hers, and who had helped him wonderfully in his career. She had a high opinion of his intelligence, and constantly fought against his inborn laziness and indolence, urging him along and holding perpetually

A. J. Balfour

before his eyes the prospects of becoming one day Prime Minister, a prospect for which he did not care in those days, but which he ended by considering inevitable, after his aunt had represented to him that he was the only man capable of taking the place of the Marquis of Salisbury in politics. In this appreciation she was mistaken, because Arthur Balfour had none of the great lines in his personality which made his uncle's character the really grand thing it was and remained until the death of this eminent statesman. Balfour was always a dreamer, and it was only later on, when age had in a certain sense sobered him, that he began to understand the necessity to be practical in politics as well as in life. He did very well on the whole, because he had been reared in excellent traditions, and taught that honesty of purpose and straightforwardness in intention was after all the best way to get along. He was very brilliant in his conversations when he condescended to talk—which did not happen frequently—as well as in his writings, though the latter were at times too idealistic to be understood by many.

Arthur Balfour knew himself to be a clever man, but he admitted that there were also other clever people in the world, and there was no pompousness about him. He did not say that he believed himself to be an important personage, whatever he may have thought about it in the secret of his heart, and though he called himself a "Soul," yet he did not deny that others were also possessed of one.

When Lord and Lady Salisbury had passed away,

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Balfour had to stand or fall on his own merits, and consequently had to give more attention to politics than when they were alive to guide him. As a rule he proved successful in his way of manipulating them, and if he was less brilliant than one might have expected, when he occupied at last the important position of Prime Minister, he avoided mistakes and on the whole behaved quite decently the whole time he remained in office, until at last he became a tradition, an anchor of safety for the Conservative party, who knew he would never lead it on a road of adventure, and that he would uphold the old principles of Toryism as embodied by his uncle, Lord Salisbury, with sufficient energy and foresight to ensure its not being wrecked on the rocks of opportunism or of obstinacy. His greatest quality consisted in his being an Englishman of the old school, full of honour, imbued with a strong common sense, and the determination never to sacrifice one iota of those principles of government that have made the British Empire the great thing it is to-day.

George Curzon—another “Soul”—was very different from Arthur Balfour. He had more incisive brightness of repartee, more pluck, more self-will, and much less pliability, kindness and patience with the general stupidity of mankind. The story of how at Oxford an undergraduate who had suffered at his hands wrote out the famous epigram :

“My name is George Nathaniel Curzon,
And I am a very superior purzon.”

Lord Curzon

and sent it round to all his co-students, is well known, and the victim of this well-deserved rebuke never lived it down.

There is another anecdote, which I believe has only circulated among a small circle of people, which is even more illustrative of the unpleasant pompousness of George Curzon, and of the opinion which existed about him in those early days of his career. The thing happened during a country house-party which had assembled at the castle of a lady closely connected with the present Marquis Curzon of Kedleston, when private theatricals and charades were arranged in which some of the guests were to take part. When the question arose as to who should represent the old butler, who was to be a leading character in one of these charades, everybody present decided that the only person who could be asked to undertake it would be Curzon, who was expected the next day, as he alone could display the necessary gravity required for the situation, and it was settled that he would be requested to do so as soon as he arrived. This important affair had been discussed during dinner, when the servants had necessarily heard its details; when Lady X. went up to her room she was extremely surprised to hear a knock at the door and to find that her butler, who had been twenty years in the service of the family, was standing before it. Upon her asking him what he wanted, the man replied that he hoped her ladyship would excuse the liberty which he was taking, but that he had come to beg her not to let Mr.

Those I Remember

Curzon enact the part of a butler in the charades which were being arranged.

“ But why? ” asked the astonished lady.

“ Please, your ladyship, it would never do. Mr. Curzon would look too important and not sufficiently dignified. A butler must be dignified, your ladyship ; he represents the family. Mr. Curzon would never do as a butler ! ”

When one considers the enmities which this unquestionably able man has aroused, enmities which the exercise of a little tact might easily have avoided, one wonders how Lord Curzon could have made the brilliant career which he has achieved. Of course, he had luck, and last but not least the help of a clever, enterprising, courageous wife, who understood his little weaknesses and knew how to turn them to his advantage whenever this was possible, or to make them sink into oblivion when it was not. Mary Curzon was a wonder, and no one except her husband can realize how much he owes to her devotion and affection.

One of Lord Curzon's predecessors in the Viceroyalty of India was the Earl, later Marquis of Dufferin and Ava. Lord Dufferin was certainly one of the charming personalities of his time, not only clever, but at intervals gifted with flashes of real genius, which he was intelligent enough not to allow to appear on the surface. Immensely tactful, he carried this quality so far that he never attempted to put his own achievements forward, and invariably tried to remain in a back seat, waiting for people to

Lord Dufferin

lead him into those front rows to which he belonged, but which he was far too mindful of his future career to invade before invited to do so. He had been placed more than once in the course of his diplomatic career in most difficult positions, but had always emerged, not only with honour, but also—which is far more difficult—without wounding anybody. In St. Petersburg, Constantinople, Calcutta, Rome and Paris, wherever fate had carried him, he had left the best of remembrances, and together with his lovely and accomplished wife he not only made for himself an exceptional position, but contrived to make his country liked in quarters where, until he appeared, it had only been appreciated. Most conciliatory in his manner as well as in his language, he handled to a nicety the art of saying unpleasant things in a pleasant way, and it is doubtful whether diplomacy ever knew a more brilliant man, or a more firm one when firmness was absolutely necessary.

Lord Dufferin held to the opinion that one never loses anything by being amiable. This, in a great measure, was the secret of his success, a success which never failed him in his public career, but which, unfortunately, did not always attend his private life. Perhaps he thought too much and had been too completely absorbed by his diplomatic duties to apply diplomacy in regard to the daily events of his existence, because the financial shadow under which his last years were spent is well known to everyone who had followed his progress through all the vicissitudes of a varied and on the whole entirely commendable

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career. When he died no word except of praise was said or written about him, and with him disappeared one of the most charming representatives of the British Foreign Office, one who had had but one real rival, and this was Lord Odo Russell, later Lord Ampthill.

Lord Ampthill was luckier than Lord Dufferin in so far as he died at the zenith of his fame, after he had made for himself a quite unique position among his colleagues in Berlin, where for many years he represented the Court of St. James's, and where he achieved the almost unbelievable success of remaining on the best, and indeed intimate, terms with Prince von Bismarck, as well as with the German Crown Prince and Crown Princess. His manners were perhaps not as suave as those of Lord Dufferin, but he gave one the impression of being the more serious of the two, which indeed he was in many respects. A wonderful linguist, he had the advantage of being able to talk with foreigners in their own idioms and thus to take them unawares. Indeed, he was credited with having said one day that what had won for him the sympathies of Bismarck was that he had given the latter the possibility of quarrelling with him in German. This *boutade* contained a good deal of truth, especially to those who had the possibility of knowing and appreciating certain peculiarities in the character of the first German Chancellor.

Whether on that account or for some other reason, the fact remains that Lord Ampthill could

Lord Ampthill

tell Bismarck things no one else would even have dared to suggest to him. He understood to perfection the singularities of the latter's mind, a mind too great to admit opposition in others, whom he always more or less suspected to be fools. This was not the case with the then British Ambassador, and the Iron Chancellor respected the latter as much as he could respect anybody, and never forgot one single instant, when dealing with him, that he had to cope with someone who was more than his match, and which made him look upon Lord Ampthill with different eyes from those he directed on the other diplomats or statesmen he came across. Bismarck had had to do with all the prominent statesmen of his time and generation, but neither Prince Schwarzenburg, the famous Austrian Minister, nor Prince Gortschakoff, nor even Lord Beaconsfield or Lord Salisbury, had inspired him with the sullen esteem he admitted he felt towards Lord Ampthill, an esteem he sometimes grudged him and which often made him impatient, but which he could never disavow, no matter how much or how hard he wanted to do so.

In his difficult duties as British Ambassador in Berlin Lord Ampthill was admirably seconded by his clever and accomplished wife, a daughter of Lord Clarendon, and a close friend of both Queen Victoria and the Empress Frederick of Germany, who was the very perfection of an Ambassadors, and whose grace and charm are remembered to this day by all those who had the pleasure to approach her: a

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charm and a grace which it seems have never left her even in her extreme old age. At eighty years old and more the Dowager Lady Ampthill has realized the famous saying of the Princess Lieven, when she declared that even if she grew to be one hundred years old people would still be anxious to hear her talk.

Lord Lytton was also one of the prominent diplomats of the last years of the Victorian era. During the time he spent as Ambassador in Paris he contrived to make himself delightful to everybody, and he frequented circles which his predecessors had ignored for reasons he did not accept, as there always was something Bohemian in his nature if not in his character. Somehow one never could associate an English peerage with his person. He reminded one of the poet he was, the journalist he would have liked to be, and the clever writer his father had been. A brilliant talker, but sometimes a not altogether profound thinker, he yet conveyed to his audiences the idea that he was always thinking, even when he was only dreaming. It was impossible not to like him or not to be under the charm of his attractive and original personality; but perhaps it was just as well for his reputation that he never found himself face to face with any real difficulty, one of those difficulties which a poet cannot settle with a sonnet or a diplomat with a good dinner; but his dinners were always good and his verses always pleasant reading. And, after all, what more could be required from an Ambassador in those distant, far-away times which preceded the catastrophe of 1914, by which dip-

Sir Robert Morier

lomacy, among other things, perished for ever, to be replaced by the plain speaking of new people, who have become reckless to the extent of forgetting their manners, scorning poetry and eating with their knives?

In vivid contrast to these three representatives of what I would call the diplomacy of high life stood Sir Robert Morier, incontestably one of the cleverest men in the service, but abrupt, disagreeable, disliked by everybody and hated by numbers, whose impetuosity of character and fierce temper had caused him to be abhorred even by those who otherwise appreciated his real qualities. Sir Robert had never cared to make friends for himself. In this he was mistaken, because it never harms and often helps a diplomat to be surrounded by well-wishers; but the fact of the matter was that he was too much of a snob to try to ingratiate himself among those who did not stand higher than he in the social scale, and too full of his own importance to attempt to make himself liked by brighter stars than himself in the horizon of fashionable life. His aloofness from others, I am convinced, had been one of the reasons why he was credited with more intelligence than was really the case, and why what would have been ordinary in anyone else was considered as something quite wonderful in him. He created his own reputation, thanks to the care he took to make it an unpleasant one, and those who had had to put up with some of his cold-blooded insolences, or to submit to one of his fits of detestable temper, coupled with

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intolerable rudeness, hastened to call him remarkable lest he annihilate them if they dared say to the contrary. Morier was a bully and a disagreeable one; but he was a diplomat possessed of unusual acumen, although he never could put it to any practical purpose. When he died there was a sigh of relief in London as well as in St. Petersburg, where he was accredited as Ambassador, and no great sorrow followed his disappearance either in Downing Street or in the red building on the Moyka in which the Russian Foreign Office was located.

CHAPTER V

NOTABLE SOCIETY HOSTESSES

IN her youth the Duchess of Devonshire had been an international beauty and was the happy possessor of quick-acting tact. There was no ice so thin that she could not skate over, no position from which she could not escape with honour and advantage. People reproached her with having no heart, but if she had possessed any she would never have become the social star she lived and died, nor would she have earned that title of the "Double Duchess," by which she came to be known in London after she had married the Duke of Devonshire, her first husband having been the Duke of Manchester. The Marquis of Hartington, afterwards the eighth Duke of Devonshire, was ranked by many next to Lord Salisbury in political influence. He was not a brilliant man, and a duller dinner companion could hardly be found; but his sterling qualities inspired confidence in political friends and enemies alike. It was sometimes said that he would never have taken up politics had it not been for the persuasion of the lady who was to become his wife. Her influence over London society was enormous and was never exercised in any bad sense; she was in some respects an uncrowned queen whose decrees were always

Those I Remember

obeyed. A German by birth, she had remained very German in her sympathies, though she would not have consented to live in Germany for anything.

The old Duke of Devonshire had never approved of his son's infatuation for the brilliant Duchess of Manchester, and he threatened at times to leave the bulk of his vast private fortune to his other two sons. Now this private fortune was far superior to the entailed family estates, large as they were, and the Duchess did not intend to lose it. She therefore applied herself with consummate skill to overcome the prejudices of the old Duke, to persuade him that she had not the slightest intention of marrying his heir. She declared far and wide that she would never remarry, refusing, to his despair, Lord Hartington's offer. She knew that his father was nearly ninety, and that provided she remained patient the greatest prize in the British matrimonial market was bound to fall to her, which it did, because twelve months after his father's demise the new Duke led to the altar the lady whose charms and intelligence had influenced the whole course of his life.

The years which preceded the accession of King Edward to the Throne were very brilliant. It was the time of great hostesses, but receptions were soon to lose the *éclat* and the exclusiveness of the Victorian days, though perhaps they became more amusing. Beautiful women also became more scarce. I don't think it would be easy to-day to find such lovely creatures as were, for instance, the Feversham sisters, or the Marchioness of Londonderry, the

Lady Dudley

Dowager Countess of Dudley, or the many sisters of the then Duke of Abercorn.

Lady Londonderry was certainly as lovely as a poet's dream, and anything more wonderful than her appearance at a Court ball, covered with her magnificent diamonds, has never been seen.

Lady Dudley, just as pretty, but without the classic profile of Lady Londonderry, was much sought after in society in spite of the eccentricities of her elderly husband, one of which, I was told, was to take to his bed whenever his wife had given him a child. One day a malicious person said that the Countess of Dudley had given birth to a son, and that the baby and the earl were both getting on quite well, a *bon mot* which delighted all who were acquainted with the Dudleys.

Another lady who sometimes, though not often, opened the doors of her splendid London residence, Montagu House, was the Duchess of Buccleuch, who was Mistress of the Robes to the Queen, and one of the handsome sisters of the Duke of Abercorn. Her mother had been that wonderful Louisa, Duchess of Abercorn, who was one of the few personal friends of Queen Victoria, and who died at well over ninety.

She left a family of over one hundred members—children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren—and was called the “ancestress of the whole British aristocracy,” which was very nearly true, because there is now scarcely one great family that is not connected through her with the Abercorns.

Another great London hostess was the Duchess

Those I Remember

of Westminster, the first wife of the first Duke of that name, a wonderful beauty in her youth, who had preserved her good looks to a remarkable degree in spite of an ever-increasing tendency to stoutness which she tried in vain to fight, going to the extent of partaking of various drugs to obtain this desirable result, drugs which, if we are to believe all we hear, brought on the disease of which she ultimately died. She was a very imposing woman, and when, covered with magnificent diamonds, she entered a ballroom, she produced a really great impression. Some people accused her of being too statuesque and cold, but this was only outward, because at heart she was exceedingly kind, and often went out of her way to oblige her neighbour. Under her rule Grosvenor House in London, and Eaton Hall in Cheshire, became the centres of gorgeous entertainments at which the élite of English and Continental aristocracy was invited, although the Duchess was rather discriminating in regard to the latter, and it required something more than a great name to secure admission to her drawing-rooms.

The Duchess did not favour foreigners as a rule, but those she accepted she welcomed with that haughty grace of which she had the secret, and made thoroughly at home. She never was familiar; indeed, familiarity was a thing she never understood or approved of; but she was cordial and attentive to her guests, and she always made them feel and realize that by being asked at Grosvenor House their social position and success were established beyond a doubt.

Duchess of Westminster

Her receptions were just a shade dull, but what they lacked in gaiety they gained in magnificence, a comment which also may apply to the dances and balls which took place in her London home.

Her successor, the present Dowager Duchess of Westminster, was of a more retiring disposition, and although she made an excellent wife to the Duke, the brilliance which his first consort had known so well how to communicate to her entertainments was lacking.

Stafford House also saw many receptions, which were eagerly awaited and sought after even more than invitations to Buckingham Palace. During the Victorian era this sumptuous dwelling knew three Duchesses of Sutherland, each one beautiful, gifted with rare charm and consummate grace, and each one clever, brilliant and attractive to a rare degree. The Duchess Annie, the grandmother of the present Duke, was perhaps the most liked by her family and friends. She was a woman of rare merit, whose life, unfortunately for her, had been anything but happy ; she had many bitter disappointments. Her daughter-in-law, a sister of the present Lord Rosslyn, was married to the then Marquis of Stafford at seventeen, and was also considered a great beauty, who, when she became its mistress, made Stafford House a centre of fashion intermingled with frivolity, but infinitely more delightful than it had been under the austere rule of the two preceding Duchesses. She was of an amiable nature and temperament, and explained to her family her second marriage to a man

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far inferior to her first husband in regard to social position as being due to her inability to sit down alone to dinner. She now lives in Paris, and as Lady Millicent Hawes has more friends than ever. During the war she equipped an ambulance, which she took over to France at her own expense, behaved extremely well in every respect, and does not seem to regret in any way the strawberry leaves she discarded in favour of real love, a love the course of which has, contrary to the proverb, run with exceeding smoothness.

I wonder whether we shall ever see again such receptions as those over which these famous hostesses used to preside. They have gone out of fashion, or, rather, have been abandoned owing to their enormous cost. One after the other, the great houses which were landmarks in London have been closed or have changed hands, and people have taken the habit of putting up at some fashionable hotel when in town for the season, spending the rest of the year in the country. At hotels they can entertain their friends at a smaller cost than in stately homes such as Bridgewater House, Dudley House in Park Lane, or other mansions of equal importance and size. Devonshire House has been sold, and the white marble staircase, which was one of its wonders, will never again have a beautiful hostess, sparkling all over with the Devonshire family diamonds, standing at the top step beside its owner to meet her guests. Gone are those days, gone is the spirit which presided at those entertainments, gone is the pomp and the glory and such

Lady Dorothy Nevill

things which once constituted the social life of London, the London which Kenneth Howard described so well when he said that there was no place like it in the whole of the wide world.

One remarkable old lady who should not be forgotten is Lady Dorothy Nevill. She was a wonderful personage who knew everybody worth knowing, had met almost every celebrity both in England and abroad, had seen more scandals, and been made the confidante of more family secrets than any other woman in her sphere of life. She was endowed with a superb self-assurance and considered herself an oracle, or rather *the* oracle, to whose wisdom it was the duty of all her friends to appeal. Yet she had nothing aggressive in her conviction of her own importance, and she had friends by the score who sometimes laughed quietly at her, but who generally accepted her decisions with meekness and deference. She was a real *grande dame*, with a touch of disdain in the way she greeted strangers, and of polite condescension when she welcomed friends.

Lady Dorothy Nevill was indeed an institution in the social life of London during the years which immediately preceded the end of the last century, and when she died it seemed as if one of its important landmarks had disappeared; most certainly vanished a centre of reunion for a select part of society.

She was one of four old ladies who each, in her way, was considered so important that no one dared to neglect them or to remark upon their peculiarities. The other three were the Countess of Cardigan, Lady

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Burdett-Coutts and Lady Stanley of Alderley. The last was perhaps the most attractive, because she combined with a great intelligence much experience of the world and an endless indulgence for its mistakes and follies, of which she had seen too much in her immediate family circle not to feel lenient toward such—shall we say “frailties”?

So much has been written about Lady Burdett-Coutts that it seems there is nothing left to record. She had a strong dislike to publicity, and she was absolutely devoted to philanthropic work done quietly and without the interference or approval of outsiders. Few people have done the good she contrived to cram into her long life, and few have done it more unostentatiously.

Some people made fun of her at the time of her marriage, and reproached her for becoming the wife of a man so much younger than herself.

Lady Cardigan was quite different from the three ladies whom I have just attempted to sketch. She was really a formidable woman, the more formidable because up to her death, which occurred when she was close upon ninety, she persisted in affecting the manners of a young person, and of dressing according to it. Her maid must have had a terrible time of it, curling and arranging the flaxen wig which adorned her head, lacing the corsets in which she kept her body tightly screwed, and making her beautiful in general, which, thanks to the aids of art, she contrived to remain in spite of her age. To see her presiding at her dinner table dressed in white satin,

Lady Cardigan

with rosebuds in her hair, lovely jewels glistening on her neck and the bodice of her gown, and small, high-heeled slippers on her feet, one could forgive her the airs and graces in which she delighted because they did not make her ridiculous. And, indeed, Lady Cardigan could not have been ridiculous no matter what she did.

London did not like her, and in a certain sense London had ostracized her since her early romance with the Earl of Cardigan. She enjoyed the reputation of being wicked, there can be no doubt about that, and there was nothing she liked better than to be able to say some ill-natured thing, or to repeat some piece of spicy gossip; and in her old age she tried to pay off old scores by publishing a volume of reminiscences.

There was one person who was particularly disliked by Lady Cardigan, and this was one of her relatives, the equally famous Maria, Marchioness of Ailesbury, who with her innumerable flaxen curls, her lace shawls, and her rather outrageously low-necked dresses, was also one of these figures to be seen everywhere in London society. Maria, Marchioness, as she was familiarly called, used sometimes to complain meekly about the way in which she had been treated by her kinswoman, but she never retaliated, perhaps because she knew that this effort would have met with an immediate punishment, and perhaps because she was really too indolent and too kind-hearted to do so, for this aged butterfly could never have harmed anyone, not even the angry people

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who tried to kill her exuberance and enjoyment of a completely pleasant existence.

The Prince of Wales was very fond of Maria—"Old Maria," as he sometimes used to say, when she was not there to hear it—and it was whispered that on more than one occasion he had confided in her and sought advice from her experience. Edward often remarked that no one could cheer him up like this friend of many years, whose loss was a real blow to him, when at last she closed her eyes upon the world. Two days before her death she had tried on a new ball gown, and when she felt that her last hours were approaching she called her maid and told her that she wished to be buried in that gown. "At least I will have worn it once; it is such a pretty thing," she remarked with melancholy.

Lady Randolph Churchill was one of the first Americans to marry into the English peerage, and as such she was looked upon with a certain curiosity when she was introduced to the gay world of London, which at that time did not care for foreigners in general, and for Americans in particular. She had, in consequence, to overcome many prejudices, and to display an unusual amount of tact before she acquired the great personal position which she kept until her dying day.

Lady Randolph paved the way for other brides from America for the peerage, and persuaded London society that her countrywomen were altogether delightful and adorable. She broke the monotony of English life by her daring, her bright

Lady Randolph Churchill

intelligence, the charm of her manners, and the great dignity which she maintained amidst circumstances which more than once proved extremely trying.

Lady Randolph's days of glory coincided with the triumph of other ladies who were called "professional beauties," and who in their heyday monopolized the attention of London society, where the Prince of Wales, who invented this name for them, made them the vogue.

Of course I have passed over a good many London hostesses in this sketch of the women who used to entertain during the season. It would be impossible to mention them all, though there would be something to say about each one of them. There were great ladies like, for instance, Lady Knightley of Fawsley—an incomparable dame who would have graced the Court of Louis XIV, and whose husband also was such a worthy representative of the true type of English gentleman. Then, again, there was the Countess Stanhope, the mother of the present peer, who received her friends at regular intervals with the inimitable grace which belonged to her alone, and which could only be rivalled by that of Countess Spencer, a magnificent woman who until her last day remained a great beauty, an incomparable hostess, a clever, kind, delightful creature. There was Viscountess Galway, who gave abominable but exceedingly smart dinners, and whose only aspiration was to be considered the most important woman in London, and to obtain an earldom for her husband—two ambitions which she did not live to

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see realized. Lady Galway was extremely intelligent but fussy, and with a nervous dread of doing anything that might have harmed her socially. She came from a family of bankers, was familiar with Stock Exchange intricacies to a surprising degree, and money always remained in her eyes something more important than anything else, Heaven included. She was very abrupt in her manners, and seemed to be always in a hurry, always doing something, always thinking of some way to make herself conspicuous.

Foreign visitors in London were always fond of the Opera, where one could meet all the wealth, beauty and fashion of the whole world during the season. The Princess of Wales could be seen nearly every night in her box, with a big bouquet of flowers awaiting her, and people looked at her radiant beauty more than they listened to the singers, except on those rare occasions when some unusually wonderful artist was appearing on the stage. Those were the days of the omnibus box, which the Prince of Wales patronized, and where such popular figures as the late Earl of Ilchester and the late Marquis de Soveral were generally to be found for an hour or so before proceeding to one of the innumerable parties where their presence was awaited. The stately figure of the Duchess of Buckingham and Chandos could be noticed in the stalls, or with some friends in a box, and most of the many beautiful women of London society could be admired at leisure, blazing with jewels, and distributing their smiles among their numerous friends. I don't think that there was a

At the Opera

more wonderful sight than Covent Garden Opera House at the time I am writing about, when people still believed in civilization, kindness and love among nations, illusions which the war destroyed so terribly and so completely.

And then there were the races, Ascot, and Epsom on Derby day, and Doncaster and Newmarket, where the gay world of London used to meet to flirt and to bet and to be happy. The enclosure at Ascot on Cup day—what a spectacle! what a unique spectacle! with all the lovely women and girls going about in beautiful Parisian costumes, the Royal procession, with its carriages, outriders, and footmen in scarlet liveries, the merry lunches in the Guards' tent, and the general atmosphere of joy and pleasure which pervaded the brilliant assembly of all that was beautiful, famous, wealthy or distinguished in Europe. What a sight, what an extraordinary sight! and how different from what it is to-day, when the world has learned, and at what price, that all is not rosy in life, and that tears can be shed just as easily as kisses were given away in those happy, happy far-away days.

The Doncaster meeting was very different from Ascot, inasmuch as it was much more of a real business affair than the latter, where the horses were about the last thing one thought of. Many house-parties used to be given at the time the St. Leger race was run, and great excitement prevailed all over Yorkshire for days previous to this great event, as well as after it had taken place. One Doncaster I

Those I Remember

can still recall, when a complete outsider called Throstle carried everything before him, to the general consternation. No one suspected that this ugly, awkward brute had it in him to beat the favourite, and who was expected to add the St. Leger to his other honours. On the morning of the races I was walking in the paddock with a friend when the late Duke of Cambridge joined us, together with a man who related to us with a laugh that the evening before he had been told that a horse called Throstle was the most dangerous opponent the favourite had. "Let's go and have a look at the brute," remarked the Duke. We all went, when it was decided that Throstle was no good at all, and that the man who had advised to be careful of him did not know what he was talking about. One may therefore imagine the surprise created by the easy victory of an outsider, the name of which had never been heard of before; he simply carried away the big race under the noses of the best horses on the Turf, and to the despair of those who had backed a favourite who had refused to justify their faith in his merits.

I think that it was at Ascot that I saw for the last time the Countess of Warwick, then still Lady Brooke, and at the height of her fame and beauty. She was the most talked-of woman in London, had as many enemies as there were stars in the sky, but never cared a jot, going her way serenely, smiling at a world she despised as much as she appreciated it.

At the Races

Another lady, very different from Lady Warwick, was generally seen at Ascot and at Newmarket, one of the few who regularly attended the meetings held on that famous spot. She was the late Countess Cadogan, the first wife of the father of the present holder of the title. She was a wonderfully attractive person, one who combined with rare dignity much kindness and the pleasantest of appearances. Lady Cadogan was an excellent hostess, and her balls at Chelsea House were among the loveliest given in the British capital during the season. They were very select also, and it was considered a great honour to be asked to them. I heard once an extremely clever man, who was not above making a joke, remark that no one could ever indulge in one at the expense of Lady Cadogan. She was above everything of the kind, and the only feeling one could entertain for her was the deepest and most profound respect.

The late Duchess of Cleveland, the mother of Lord Rosebery, was a type of those wonderful old ladies who die before they grow aged, even if they live to a hundred years. To many people she was a thorn in the flesh, of which she was perfectly aware, but which she enjoyed immensely. No woman has ever been more sure of her position and more abused its privileges. She loved to show her power, and revelled in the knowledge that no one, the Queen not excepted, could make her say what she did not want to say or do what she did not like. Very clever, she had a caustic tongue which she used unmercifully at times and unsparingly always. But,

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with it all, she could be kind when she cared, and even gentle when she fancied. She had her likes and dislikes, and she loved her son more than anything else in the world, forgiving him what she would never have pardoned in anyone else. In some things the Duchess belonged to another world than ours. Had she lived to the present day, she would probably never have reconciled herself to the many changes brought about by the war, or to the consequent transformation of London society. She would most probably have been quite horrified to see women and girls go about in the independent manner they do nowadays, and most likely would have fainted at the thought of being compelled to use an omnibus instead of a big chariot or barouche and pair, because the motor car would surely have met her scorn. The story goes that one day her carriage which was to fetch her at the house of a friend was delayed, and the Duchess compelled to walk home a rather long distance.

“ But, Duchess, why did you not call a hansom? ” she was asked by one of her friends to whom she was relating this adventure.

“ A hansom ; my dear, I never thought about it. Do people in our position go about in hansom? ”

CHAPTER VI

SOME LIONS IN LITERATURE

LADY BORTHWICK, afterwards Lady Glenesk, and the wife of the owner of the *Morning Post*, also entertained a good deal in her house in Piccadilly, where one was always sure to meet pleasant people.

There was one person in London whose dinner parties were memorable, whether during the season or out of it. This was Moberly Bell, of *The Times*, Moberly Bell, whose execrable meals, given in a room that could only have held with comfort half the persons whom he invited, were nevertheless considered as events that no one would have missed, because they always brought one into contact with interesting or clever people whom it was well worth meeting. In a certain sense Moberly Bell was an institution, and not to know him was to proclaim oneself unknown.

There was a curious charm about this immense, burly man who was so effusive in his greetings, whose handshakes were so fervent and so cordial, and whose whole personality inspired confidence and attracted one, even when one did not agree with all his opinions. Everybody liked Moberly Bell, and he also liked, or at least said that he liked, everyone of

Those I Remember

the people, and their name was legion, who crossed his hospitable threshold.

Mrs. Moberly Bell was a delightful woman, possessed of singular attraction and of considerable intelligence, coupled with a wonderful sense of observation which allowed her to take note of the mental and physical characteristics of the people with whom she came into contact, and to be of great help to her husband in his responsible position. She had a rare talent for distinguishing the truth amidst the oceans of gossip which might have engulfed her had she paid any attention to it, except to weigh its reliability. Very often her tact saved Moberly Bell from committing one of those mistakes which are more unpardonable in journalism than anywhere else, and it is certain that she contributed considerably to his success.

I don't remember now whether it was at the house of the Moberly Bells or elsewhere that I met Mrs. Humphry Ward, then at the height of her fame. She had just published "Marcella," and was the most talked of woman in England. A niece of Matthew Arnold, she resembled him in certain points, but where he attracted she repulsed. She was too serious, if such an appreciation will be forgiven me, too serious in the sense that she appeared completely crushed under the weight of her own learning, of her own intelligence. She was narrow-minded, and could only look at things from a certain point of view. She was well described by the Empress Frederick of Germany, who observed, after

Mrs. Humphry Ward

a conversation with her, that Mrs. Ward would be such a delightful person if she would only forget at times that she was Mrs. Ward.

It is curious, in view of this judgment, to read Mrs. Ward's appreciation of the Empress, whom she describes in one of her letters as being "very charming, but not at all intellectual," a judgment based on absolutely nothing tangible, but which is very explainable to those who have known both women. The Empress, curious as it is, was timid to the extreme when she found herself in the presence of people of whose superiority she had heard a great deal, and she withdrew within herself when conversing with them, leaving behind her the sensation of being far less clever than was actually the case. She was extremely impulsive, and went always by her first impressions, which often were not just or based on anything real and tangible. She was probably disagreeably impressed by the superiority with which Mrs. Ward had most likely attempted to impose upon her. Very well read, and keeping herself in close touch with modern literature of every country in Europe, the Empress nevertheless was careful of not letting her judgments on such and such a book become common property, this caution having had its origin in the fact that in the earlier years of her married life she had read a good many books of which her husband's family, and especially her mother-in-law, the old Empress Augusta, would have strongly disapproved, and that she had schooled herself, in consequence, never to mention. Extremely intel-

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lectual, in spite of Mrs. Humphry Ward's assertion to the contrary, she was shy of showing that such was the case, and avoided any subject of conversation which could have conveyed the idea she courted approval of her judgments and opinions. The author of "Robert Elsmere" had interested her to the extent of desiring to meet her, but most likely she was rather disappointed when this meeting took place, and took refuge in banalities, a general habit with her when she discovered that she had no points in common with her audience. The remark she made about Mrs. Ward proves such was the case when the two ladies met, and it is evident that something of her impression was shared by her visitor. It is not surprising, therefore, that when they parted they were mutually disappointed, although in a different way.

Talking of the Empress Frederick reminds me of another of her encounters with a famous English writer, Lecky. They began by being delighted with each other, and the Empress found herself having many points in common with her visitor until they touched upon Ernest Renan, the French author, for whom the Empress had an unbounded admiration, which was not shared by Mr. Lecky, who in the heat of the discussion which followed exclaimed that what he did not like in Renan was "that he had transformed the personality of Christ into that of a shepherd of Florian's tales." The Empress, hurt to the quick, turned her back on the celebrated historian, and never would consent to speak to him

The Leckys

again, in spite of all the efforts which were made by her sisters—Princess Christian in particular—to make her restore to her good graces the unfortunate man who most unwittingly and unknowingly had tried to shatter one of her most cherished idols.

The Leckys were charming people, and extremely popular in London society. They entertained a great deal in a quiet way, and the gracious and sympathetic bearing of Mrs. Lecky was set off by the urbanity of her famous husband. They used to give dinners and lunches, which were as good as they were pleasant, and one could meet under their hospitable roof the most distinguished men and women in town. The reputation of Mr. Lecky would have been sufficient to draw them to him, but, apart from his merits as an historian, he was such a pleasant and agreeable man that one could always feel at ease in his society.

Mr. Lecky was always at his best when speaking of some of his great contemporaries, such as Carlyle, Froude or Dean Stanley, of whom he was a great admirer, and with whom it always seemed to me that he was more in sympathy than with his own two other rather formidable rivals. Carlyle he considered as the greatest of all living historians, with one exception, perhaps, and this was Leopold von Ranke, whose impartiality he immensely admired. He was never impartial himself, but the natural kindness of his temperament smoothed away much of what otherwise might have been aggressive bias. He had the great gift of sympathy, which was the more wonder-

Those I Remember

ful in that his rather lackadaisical manner was certainly not sympathetic and often gave a wrong idea as to his personality.

Some people said that Lecky was too much in love with the world to become classed among great writers, and, when all is said and done, the word Great could hardly be applied to him, but he was undoubtedly one of the best authors of his day, and his command of language was absolutely wonderful. I thought sometimes that had he lived a more retired existence he might have blossomed into a far more important personality in the world of literature than was actually the case; but he liked society, he was at his best when enjoying it, and he cultivated observation with a keenness which few suspected, because he was far too well disposed towards humanity to allow himself to criticize it otherwise than gently—*very* gently.

I only saw Carlyle once, and this at an age when I could not appreciate him, but only be awed by his appearance and his stern aspect. He struck me then as being absolutely ferocious, which he also was in regard to the stupidity or failings of his neighbour. From what I heard later from people who knew him well, this impression of mine was correct, because the great author of the "History of the French Revolution" was absolutely merciless in his judgments, and never hesitated from mercilessly expressing them, rather amusing himself with the consternation his witty paradoxes created. I cannot conceive anyone liking Mr. Carlyle, but I also cannot

Oscar Wilde

conceive how anyone could help being struck by his wonderful personality, and the sharp glance of his formidable eye, which reminded one of the dissecting knife of the surgeon, which it certainly was to a great degree.

This reminiscence reminds me how the French writer, Hippolyte Taine, being asked one day whom he considered the greatest historian of the nineteenth century, replied without hesitation that it was Carlyle. He added that his page on Mirabeau, beginning with the words, "From whatever side one looks at this questionable Mirabeau . . ." was the finest one that had ever been written, no matter in what language.

Froude, who disliked Carlyle intensely, was also under the charm of his style and incomparable way of expressing himself. In fact, no one who had either met him or read any of his works could fail sharing the opinion that he was epochal in the history of modern English literature, and even those, and they were legion, who secretly envied him were compelled to acknowledge his merits. Yet he made no friends, only admirers, and this is sometimes not sufficient to secure the immortality of living for ever in the hearts of others at the same time as in history.

In those bygone days about which I am writing Oscar Wilde was still at the zenith of his fame, and no one suspected that this idol of the public was destined to end his days in shame and in disgrace. He was always a desired and much sought after guest at dinner, and hostesses were eager to secure

Those I Remember

his presence at their entertainments. But in spite of this unreal popularity, because it was nothing but that, there was something most eerie in the man and in his ways. A keen observer could not help wondering if, sooner or later, something would become known which would be to his detriment and which would do away with the poetical halo hovering around his head. He had an agreeable manner, but such a conviction of his own importance and genius that it sometimes bordered on the ridiculous. At times it seemed as if for him there existed but one man on earth, and his name was Oscar Wilde. He did not admit any superiority, refused to bow down before any talent, and subordinated everything to a love for what he called the beautiful. Women toadied to him, but I doubt if one had ever loved him, because there was nothing to love in him, nothing to be attracted in him, nothing to make one think that it would be possible to play any part in his selfish existence. He said he worshipped beauty, as indeed he did in Nature and people, but it was marred by his overweening estimate of his intellectual achievements or physical charms.

A year or two before the scandal that broke him, an immensely clever man, now dead, Count Louis de Turenne, a keen observer of humanity, happened during a visit to London to meet Oscar Wilde. When asked what impression the latter had produced upon him, he replied that it had been negative in the sense of goodness or beauty, but exceedingly unpleasant in that of vice, which he had refined until

Marie Corelli

he had transformed it into a public danger. The remark was profoundly true if uncharitable; but, then, Turenne had never been noted for harbouring charitable feelings in regard to anyone or anything.

Marie Corelli had at one time been under the influence of Wilde's writings. I am using with intention the words "at one time," because, in spite of her extravagances and affectations, there was a great deal of honesty about that famous feminine writer who, even as I am writing these words, has just passed away at her wonderful home in Stratford-on-Avon. She would no more have countenanced sexual immorality than she could have flown without an aeroplane. But her own imagination was such a vivid one that, already knowing Oscar Wilde in literary work, it was quite natural she should have been attracted by books which, like the "Picture of Dorian Grey," were so beautifully composed and couched in such wonderful language. Wilde would call upon her, and she enjoyed his conversations to a considerable extent. One thing I admire her for: she was brave enough to keep silent at the time of his trial, and not to turn her back upon him ostensibly, as did so many others who had known him better than she had done.

Marie Corelli herself could not help being a terrible disappointment to those who saw her for the first time, and who had imagined her to be something so entirely different from what she really was, something after the pattern of Mavis Clare in "The Sorrows of Satan," who was supposed to have been

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drawn by her as a picture of herself. She was a short, rather stout creature, with a lot of curls hanging all over her head, a rather childish manner in its affected ingenuity, and an immense opinion of her own merits. It was told about her that being asked one day who was the prettiest woman in London, she had replied with a modest smile: "Let me see . . . there is the Princess of Wales, Mrs. Langtry, Lady Dudley, and . . . myself!" And, it must be said to her credit, she sincerely believed it to be true.

Marie Corelli and Oscar Wilde, Carlyle and Lecky, they all seem very far apart from each other, and still more apart from a man whom one used to see everywhere during the season and who, wherever he appeared, was welcomed with enthusiasm and eagerness, and this was Dr. Edgar Sheppard, the Dean of the Chapel Royal—a more kindly man and more delightful companion did not exist. Dr. Sheppard was supposed to enjoy the entire confidence of the Queen, as well as of the Royal Family, and was the recipient of more confidences and more intimate social secrets than any man alive—confidences he always respected, secrets he never betrayed. Everybody liked him, everybody sought his advice, and it would be hard to find a man so absolutely devoid of enemies than this modern type of clergyman, who, when asked one day why he had never accepted a bishopric which had been more than once offered to him, had modestly replied: "I am not worthy of it, and it would compel me to leave London. London is the only place for such a sinner

Sir D. Mackenzie Wallace

as I am." At the time I am writing about there were a few men in London whom one saw everywhere and without whom no reception, dinner or ball would have seemed complete. Such were Lord Suffield, the equerry and great friend of the Prince of Wales, Mr. Christopher Sykes, another inseparable companion of the heir-apparent, the one who once sent him the famous telegram in reply to an invitation to dinner, "Cannot come; lie follows by post"; Mr., later on Sir Edgar Vincent, who married one of the lovely Duncombe sisters, and now Lord d'Abernon, the ambassador; and Sir Donald Mackenzie Wallace, formerly foreign editor of *The Times*, who had been private secretary to Lord Dufferin during the latter's viceroyalty in India.

Sir Donald was undoubtedly an extremely clever man, and had he remained all his life a journalist and writer it is likely that his intellectual faculties would have carried him farther than was actually the case. Unfortunately, he was a snob, as only a parvenu can be, and having had the luck to attract the attention of the Prince of Wales, to whom he made himself most useful on various occasions, he had secured an entrance at Sandringham and Marlborough House, and consequently in all the smart and fashionable centres of London society. It not only turned his head, but made him turn his attention to social gossip and social successes rather than those important political matters which he had handled with such skill when working as *Times* correspondent in St. Petersburg, Constantinople and Berlin. In this way

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he failed to keep *au courant* with the general situation of the world, and diverted his thoughts into other channels than those in which he had acquired his reputation. He forgot that there existed other people than sovereigns, princes, dukes and earls, or that it was possible to live in another atmosphere than that of a Court. People knew his little foibles and smiled at them because everybody liked him, but it was impossible not to notice the care he took to write letters under some futile or puerile pretext from Sandringham House, on Sandringham stationery, so as to make his friends aware of the fact that he was enjoying himself under the roof of the heir-apparent to the Throne. Later on, before the first Russian revolution, he was sent by King Edward to report upon the situation in Russia, which he was supposed to know better than any other foreigner did, and on the subject of which he had written a book which had become classic. In St. Petersburg he continued to move in high spheres, with the result that when he returned to England he said and wrote that a political upheaval was quite out of the question in the Empire at the head of which stood Nicholas II. Three weeks later the revolution broke out, and, although it was subdued this time, it left the reputation of Sir Donald slightly impaired, and after the death of the King his social importance considerably diminished, a circumstance that very nearly broke his heart. He survived the Great War only by a few weeks, and died at what must have been a ripe old age, having outlived his social utility.

London of To-day

The curtain has fallen now upon the follies of the past fifty years or so, and it has become possible to talk about them as disinterested spectators. London to-day is very different from that London of which Edward Prince of Wales was the hero ; it has become serious, has entered into a new phase of existence. Most of its big houses are closed, some of its most prominent figures are in the realms of eternity, though the beautiful and good Princess Alexandra of Wales is the still beautiful Queen-Mother Alexandra. The lights have been put out, the music has been stilled, but the English spirit is not dead ; it has survived the shock of the catastrophe, bravely buried its unforgotten dead, and tried not to think of the happy days that are gone—the days where all these dead were laughing and murmuring sweet words into the ears of the fair women whose eyes were smiling upon them.

In this the British character had asserted itself once more, and the great agony of the war has not been wasted in England as it has in other countries. The best characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon race have come out in this supreme crisis of the history of the world. London, to be sure, has changed—perhaps even more than its society realizes—but the English race has won this moral, political and financial Derby, represented by the word Reconstruction, an expression we have heard used so much but of the importance of which so few are aware. London, or rather its society—because it is only with society these reminiscences treat—has on the whole come out well

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from the fiery ordeal and has kept its self-respect, which is more than can be said of any other European capital. The latter have sunk into the mire of misfortune, and will have a difficult task to emerge. Talking about them will be evoking memories that are buried, facts that are over and done with, shades of men and women who, if they are still alive, have become wrecks. London is still a capital—I was about to say *the* capital. It still has Society—even if its new Premier, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, is a man of the people.

CHAPTER VII

MEMORIES OF PARIS

THE Continent has not survived as has London : the aristocracy as a caste has perished ; maybe, because in the days when it was master it would not allow a democracy to develop, each growing side by side. London lives, whereas Berlin, Vienna and St. Petersburg are dead, and Paris survives only in so far as foreigners come to enliven it. " Gay Paree " may be here, but the " Ville Lumière," which was the ruler in the world of literature, art and fashion, the Paris of our youth, has changed its character, and instead of paying court to celebrities, making or marring reputations, has given itself up to the newly rich and to those adventurers who, after having made millions during the war, consider it the aim of life to spend their money at Deauville or Monte Carlo. Paris, once the shining light of Europe, has been transformed into a French Reno where wealthy Americans come to seek freedom from their matrimonial entanglements and ties. Surely this is the *summum* of degradation, and the saddest part of it is that the object of this humiliation neither knows nor feels it ! Other times, indeed !

Paris during the first twenty-five years which followed upon the establishment of the Third Republic, was a very different place from what it

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subsequently became. In those days there still existed great traditions of politeness, urbanity and beautiful manners, which in some cases, and especially among a few stately dames belonging to the select set of the Faubourg St. Germain, had a tinge of the seventeenth century, a "Louis XIV" majesty. Ceremonious etiquette presided at every entertainment, and French houses, as a rule, were closed to foreigners, except a few who, through some family alliance, had managed to gain entrance. There were still alive great politicians and writers, such as Monsieur Thiers, Mignet, Guizot and others, while even the new generation of statesmen, such as Jules Ferry and the famous Gambetta, although considered as intruders and parvenus, were yet so infinitely superior to the politicians of to-day that they cannot even be spoken of in the same breath. Politics, until the Dreyfus affair began their demoralization, had kept a tinge of grave seriousness about them; to-day they have degenerated into a hunt after notoriety and personal advantage. There were a few great figures in Paris and in the Parisian world, great figures and interesting personalities whom to know was a distinct advantage, even when it was not a privilege, and there were any number of delightful and clever persons, most of whom I have known, and of whom I have kept the pleasantest remembrances, whose memory I like to evoke and whose conversations I love to recall.

Among them Alexandre Dumas fils was perhaps one of the most amusing and entertaining. It would

Alexandre Dumas fils

be impossible to imagine a more brilliant talker ; the word "spirituel" seemed to have been created for him. A lover of paradoxes, he used to spring them upon one unawares, and always managed to make them apropos and in good taste. There was nothing coarse in his language, even when it transgressed the limits of good form, for he had a way of indicating a spade as a spade without saying so. Of course, he had his share of vanity, otherwise he would not have been a Frenchman ; but this vanity was never offensive, and although he considered himself to be the first writer in his generation, he left it to be inferred. He took great pride in the introductions which he had written to his different comedies and dramas when he published them in book form, claiming that in them he had embodied all his opinions on the many social questions which interested his countrypeople, and that he had emphasized in kindly warning the dangers by which men and women were beset in modern society. He insisted that his theatrical pieces were entirely moral, and never liked to hear anyone say that this was not absolutely the case. It is certainly true that all of them contained a moral lesson.

Dumas bragged about the fact that his works would outlive his personal fame and win for him everlasting immortality. Were he alive to-day he would have been very much surprised that they could be forgotten with such rapidity, a sure proof that they did not, as Balzac's books for instance, repose on descriptions of the failings, errors or vices of

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humanity in general, but only of that narrower circle represented by Society.

Society always had an appeal for Dumas. It was Society he had studied, whose weaknesses and foibles he had observed, but humanity as a whole did not come within his purview. He was the historian of a certain epoch, of the manners and customs of the upper ten thousand of the French *bourgeoisie*; he was not a word-painter of the wide, wide world of humanity, the weaknesses of which Balzac had so quickly discovered and so thoroughly explored in his vivid fiction.

Dumas had married a Russian, Madame Narischkine, who at one time had been very much talked about in St. Petersburg. She was an astonishing old woman, with hair which she would insist on putting into curl-papers, in which she appeared at lunch-time without "*la moindre pudeur*," as the Princess Mathilde, who was very fond of Dumas, but not so much of his wife, once said.

Madame Dumas had been a great beauty, and did not seem to remember it, which is something rare in a woman, but she ruled her husband with an iron hand, never relaxing her hold upon him. She was not jealous, but she had made up her mind that he was never to transfer his allegiance elsewhere, and she contrived to achieve this almost incredible fidelity.

The Dumas had two daughters, neither of whom had been baptized, the dramatist having determined that they should be brought up entirely without

Dumas' Daughters

religion so as to be free later on to choose the creed which they wanted to embrace. Of course, Paris looked upon this very disapprovingly, and those people who cared sufficiently for Dumas to overlook this shocking fact never allowed others to mention it in their presence. A dowager or two attempted matchmaking with the girls, and succeeded with the younger, Jeannine, who wedded a French officer belonging to an excellent family, being solemnly baptized into the Roman Catholic faith before doing so. She afterwards settled to a very quiet life in the country near some provincial town or other, the inhabitants of which had probably never heard of such things as the *Demi-Monde* or the *Visite de Noces*, these two masterpieces of Dumas' pen.

Colette, his elder daughter, did not think it necessary to have her sins wished away by the holy waters of baptism, and married for his money a rich Parisian banker, Mr. Maurice Lippmann, at a registrar's office, much to the scandal of her father's friends. This marriage did not turn out well; it would, indeed, have been impossible for it to be successful, considering the temper and character of Colette, who, having always had her own way, was not disposed to surrender it on the altar of matrimony. Monsieur and Madame Lippmann parted after a few years, and she died shortly before the war, so far as I can remember, unpardoned and impenitent. But in spite of her eccentricities she was a delightful creature, although unbalanced.

Emile Augier, who was for some time the ad-

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ministrator of the Comédie Française, was perhaps the greatest rival of Alexandre Dumas in regard to play-writing, and he had over him the advantage that his dramas and comedies were always dignified even if they were dull. He could not have created types like De Rion or Olivier de Jalin, but his theatrical pieces were always interesting, well written, and carefully thought out. Dumas did not like him, and he did not care for Dumas, but they were far too clever to show the latent hostility they nursed for each other. One evening, however, when Dumas was dining with friends, his hostess endeavoured to make him express himself in regard to Emile Augier, and teased him until at last he exclaimed: "Don't ask me what I think of Emile: I don't know myself; but I may come to form an opinion after he has placed my bust in the *foyer* of the Comédie Française." Considering the fact that this was an honour never awarded to a living author, the remark was, to say the least of it, evasive, but it sent those who heard it into fits of laughter, which perhaps was the result Dumas wished to obtain.

At that time the Comédie Française was *the* institution in Paris, far more than is the case at present, when so many other theatres have sprung up where talented artists can be seen and heard. Forty years ago, however, "la Comédie," as it was called, ranked before everything else, and it was the one supreme ambition of every good actor or actress to be admitted to its stage. It was at the Comédie that Croisette, Bernhardt—the Divine Sarah—and

La Comédie Française

the everlastingly youthful Madame Bartet, as well as Madeleine Brohan, acquired their great reputations. To belong to the Comédie was a social position in itself, and its actresses were received in society everywhere, which was not always then the case with artists playing in other theatres. In its *foyer* receptions were held at which it was considered the greatest possible honour to be invited, and which were attended by all the wealth and fashion in Paris—its masculine portion, at least.

Madame Madeleine Brohan was the doyen of the Comédie, and when later on her place was taken by Madame Blanche Pierson, her memory still reigned. She was an extremely attractive personality, an exquisite type of the *grande dame* of old, and she filled to perfection parts in which a great lady was asserting herself. Those who saw her on the first night of "*Monde où l'on s'ennuie*," the famous comedy of Edouard Pailleron, in the part of the Duchesse de Réville, all agreed that no duchess of old could have acquitted herself better. Sarah Bernhardt, as is known, made but a short stay at the Comédie, and the successes she obtained whilst one of its *pensionnaires* were not sufficient for her; she wanted to have the world as a stage, and not to be subjected to the many restrictions which artists belonging to this famous society had to accept. She had no dignity, only talent, an immense talent akin to genius, which could not brook opposition or tolerate advice, so there was nothing surprising if she took the bit in her teeth and boldly bolted. The

Those I Remember

wonder was that she had been able to stand for such a long time the curb on her liberty which her position as *Sociétaire de la Comédie Française* necessitated.

There are so many stories and anecdotes concerning the Divine Sarah that it seems impossible to tell anything about her that has not been told a hundred times in five hundred different ways. Yet there was one little incident connected with her career which, so far as I remember, was only known among her most intimate friends. When she left the *Comédie Française* great efforts were made to persuade her to reconsider her decision, and a man who was supposed to have some influence over her was deputed to do so. Very reluctantly he undertook the task, being convinced, first, that she would not listen to him; secondly, that she would make a fearful scene for his audacity in attacking her on a subject upon which she had made up her mind. To his intense surprise the actress received him very well and was quite civil to him, but when he tried to persuade her that it would be entirely to her disadvantage if she refused the offers of conciliation which he was empowered to lay at her feet, she turned her back upon him with just one word: "*Cochon!*" That was all, but the miserable visitor did not stay to hear more, as can well be imagined.

Sarah used to say that she often had intuitions and forewarnings as to what she had to do, and if this were the case when she determined to seek another stage than that of the *Comédie* for her future successes, she was undoubtedly right, because

Sarah Bernhardt

most of her fame came to her afterwards. Her personality was far too absorbing to content itself with being part of a whole when it claimed to be that whole in itself. And then she would have missed foreign adulation and foreign triumphs, which, as things turned out, followed her everywhere, not only in Europe, but also in America, where her thousands of admirers and adorers at last forgot, in their joy to greet her, what an old and infirm woman she had become.

One of her rivals, and perhaps the most dangerous, was Sophie Croisette, whom many people thought infinitely superior to Sarah, as in some things she really was. But Croisette retired from the stage at the height of her successes and at the zenith of her beauty in order to wed a multi-millionaire banker, Mr. Stern, and after living with him in the greatest of luxuries for some years, she died when still quite young. She is still remembered with tears by her old admirers and enthusiasts, who swear that there has never been anyone like her in the whole world and that French histrionic art lost in her an actress superior to Rachel, Sarah, Aimée Désclée, and all its other famous artists. Of course, Bernhardt and Croisette were not the only two favourites of the Parisian public. There was Réjane, the incomparable and inimitable Réjane, the Réjane who created Madame Sans-Gêne and so many other characters to whom she communicated the vivacity and intelligence of the stage in which she was a past master. Then there was the ever-brilliant

Those I Remember

Cécile Sorel, who, however, was more of a great coquette than a great actress; there was Jeanne Granier, the triumph of vulgarity, who imagined she could play the part of a great lady in real life instead of confining her efforts in that rôle to the stage. Nor are these all. Jeanne Hading, the lovely creature to whom so many people lost their hearts, perhaps because she was without heart; and Madame Bartet, who at seventy looked not one day older than forty, and who, far more than Sarah Bernhardt, mastered the secret of eternal youth. Madame Bartet's exquisite French diction, her grace, her wonderful manners and knowledge of the stage as well as of the world, have made her a unique figure in the Parisian world. This marvellous hostess, whose house was, and may still be, the meeting-place of all the literary and artistic celebrities of Paris. For many years a former ambassador, who was a very prominent personage just before and during the war, has always worshipped at her feet without anything coming to shake his allegiance and devotion.

Madame Bartet is one of the few people who have survived unimpaired the great deluge of the war and whom it has hardly affected. She is also one of the few who have kept the old traditions of Parisian good taste and Parisian elegant smartness; one whom the vulgarity of the present age has not touched. She has almost attained the dignity of a historical monument, raised to the France that was, not the France such as it has become to-day. Her tact is something wonderful and has carried through many an awkward

The Literary Salons

situation. Sarah has disappeared as well as Madeleine Brohan, Réjane and Croisette, Jeanne Hading and all the other minor stars of the French stage; but Madame Bartet is still here, and let us hope will still be here with us for a good many years.

I believe that literary salons in Paris as well as everywhere else have had their day. And yet how intensely interesting and amusing they were! But they belonged to a quieter epoch of the social history of the world, and I doubt very much whether they could ever be revived to-day. It requires a certain peace of soul to preside over a reunion of people who were all either famous or believed themselves to be so.

The time has gone when, every week, or even every day, regular receptions were held with no other object than conversation, in the handsomely furnished rooms of Madame Aubernon de Nerville, Madame de Loynes, the Duchesse de Maillé, or Madame Edmond Adam and Madame de Caillavet, the Egeria of Anatole France. Politics, the high cost of living, and so forth have made it difficult. The war has changed all that, and at present, if we want to see people, we have to make up our minds to ask them to dinner. And yet what a pity that it should be so! What a pity we cannot any longer, when we have an hour to spare, spend it in some hospitable house where we are sure of meeting with men of talent or even genius. What a pity that it is no more possible to seek relaxation in the society of such men as Renan or Taine or Anatole France!

Those I Remember

Renan was not a great lover of society. Yet there were places where he liked to go and where one could feel certain of finding him on certain days of the week. He was not what French people call *un grand causeur*, but what he said was always to the point, and although he resembled an old parish priest sitting in the vast armchair where he generally managed to ensconce himself, he had a smile which sometimes—very rarely, but sometimes—made one think of that of Voltaire in his famous bust by Houdon. He was gifted with a keen sense of humour which, however, he did not care to display; but he was kindness itself, and I do not think that anyone ever heard him make a nasty remark about his neighbour. There was absolutely no bitterness in him, and as he said, he could very well go on living without being a member of the French Academy, an honour his “Life of Jesus” had debarred him for ever and ever.

I remind myself of some Academy members and of the changes which, even in this august institution, have followed as a consequence of the war. Formerly it was a very sedate organization, where political opinions played a certain part, but where good manners were considered indispensable. There was one party which dominated it, “*le parti des Ducs*,” as it was called, from the three Dukes who were its leaders, the Duke de Broglie, the Duke of Noailles, and the Duke d’Audiffret-Pasquier, and this party held in its hands the fate of every new candidate who aspired to enter the ranks of the Immortals, as they were, and for the matter of that are still, called. It

The Three Dukes

was a serious party, a party who seriously examined every question of the day in the matter of literature or politics : a party out of which State Ministers were chosen and whose verdict made or marred literary reputations. To-day its influence, which had a good deal to do with the election of Paul Bourget despite much opposition, has disappeared. The *parti des Ducs*, as some one wittily remarked, has been replaced by the *parti des Maréchaux*, and it is the sword rather than the pen which is in honour at the Académie Française as well as everywhere else since the cataclysm of the great war.

The three great noblemen whom I have just mentioned had brought into their homes all the traditions of the Academy, and everybody who for some reason or other had attained to celebrity in Paris, was received in their stately mansions provided he was not a Socialist or a Bonapartist ; these two parties were rigidly excluded from the solemn gatherings, to which foreigners were always eager to be admitted. It is to be confessed that these gatherings were dull, but one could get a pretty good idea as to the state of public opinion in Paris, as well as to the political and literary tendencies of the moment. Young writers in search of fame applied all their efforts to obtain an introduction within these sacred precincts, and it is undoubted that what was left of the *parti des Ducs* made the reputation of many authors of whom no one would have heard had they not found favour in its eyes. The last remark does not apply to Paul Bourget, whose real talent would always have

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made its mark ; but yet—yet it is doubtful whether, without its protection, he would have become as popular as he is with a certain section of French society—its most elegant section let me hasten to say.

Bourget has been discussed from every angle by his admirers as well as by his detractors, and there is a good deal to be said for and against his intellectual gifts. He had set himself at the beginning of his career to imitate Balzac, and had tried to write another “*Comédie Humaine*,” that of the upper classes exclusively. He failed in the attempt because, in spite of the interest offered by his books, they did not survive the particular phase of social life which they described. What he saw he could paint with unerring accuracy ; the trouble was that he saw only the surface, never the cause or the consequences of things. Twenty years after they had been published his novels were entirely out of fashion because they reflected but the customs of the moment, the thoughts of the day, the intrigues of the hour. He had never seen humanity nor guessed human motives in events or in facts, which explains the vogue of his books at the time they appeared. All their readers recognized themselves or their friends in them, and consequently exclaimed : “What a talent this Bourget has !” But they failed to see, just as he had failed to notice, that he had described them as they were at a particular phase of their existence, not as they were in reality, and that he had not seized the human side of every human life. His personages are fashionable and smart marionettes.

Paul Bourget

They are not men and women made out of flesh and blood ; their thoughts are but the reflex of the passing vogue ; their flirtations, even, are dictated by what is considered the right thing to do at a certain time and on certain occasions, and his novels, in consequence, have shared the fate of the hats of Virot and of the dresses of Worth after a year or two. He was the Worth and the Virot of literature of one moment, and it is a great pity that he never tried to look up higher, or did not confine himself to writing the essays in which he excels and which are worth ten thousand times more than the milk-and-water romances with which he has fed his readers until they fell a prey to indigestion. The bane of M. Bourget has been precisely his aspirations after what he called " *les élégances*." He became snobbish at times in his search after those whom he considered as the pillars of the smart set, by whom he was constantly invited to their homes, but of which he never succeeded in becoming a member. His hankerings after the Faubourg St. Germain and its hostesses made him at last launch himself into writing books where the dominant note was an extreme Catholicism and the influence of the Church in family life. This attempt was not a happy one, because to handle with advantage such a delicate subject requires almost superhuman genius, whereas Paul Bourget has only talent, and that not of a psychological kind. As a consequence he blundered and got into situations whence it was impossible for him to extricate himself according to the rules and exigences of common

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sense, and his books became dull, very dull indeed, so dull that many people lacked the patience to finish them.

Madame Edmond Adam, the Juliette Lambert of Republican fame, had always been fond of Bourget. In fact, so far as I can remember, one of his first novels was published in the *Nouvelle Revue*, of which she was the owner and editor-in-chief. Afterwards their friendship cooled off until it became a pleasant memory. Madame Adam's mind was far superior to that of her young protégé, and she realized at once the weak aspects of his talent. But she was kind, and never said so; yet it was noticeable that whenever anyone began speaking to her of him she changed the conversation by asking her interlocutor what he thought of Pierre Loti, another literary star who also reached the Academy, but by another road than that of Bourget.

Loti was just as charming at times as he could be intensely unpleasant and disagreeable at others. There was too much affectation and too much self-consciousness of his real worth—for it was real—to make him attractive. His vanity was enormous, and it blinded him as to what he could really perform. But he was an artist in his way, and his mastery of the French language was absolutely wonderful, so wonderful that one evening, in the heat of a conversation on the subject of modern literature, even Anatole France, when Loti's name was mentioned, exclaimed: "Oh, this Loti! I wish I could write half so well as he does!"

Anatole France

I have mentioned Anatole France, who has survived the general *débâcle* and holds a unique position among living French authors. His talent is settling down into the quiet groove of the evening, and the shadows of night are already falling on him. He finds it difficult to adapt himself to present conditions, and so becomes indignant at the slaughter of the ideals of his youth and manhood. He is the man who has dreamt great dreams and has lived to see his ideals disappear in blood and in ruin. He cannot put himself on the level of present-day patriotism, and for him his mother country is too great a thing to become an ensign of good or of bad faith. He would have liked to end his days writing a book in which he could have put all his experiences, and he found himself drawn against his will into the fray with other people infinitely inferior to himself. "*Ma pauvre France*," he said to one of his friends returned from abroad, "*elle n'existe plus, elle est perdue, elle va mourir!*"

Anatole France at one time was quite a power in the political and journalistic world of Paris. This was during the years which immediately preceded the great war, when one could meet him every Sunday afternoon and every Wednesday evening in the salon of his great friend Madame de Caillavet, where a certain Bohemian element outvied itself with a purely literary and political circle in making her reunions the most delightful ones in Paris. She was the sister of that Maurice Lippman who had married Colette Dumas, and a very wealthy woman. People

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used to say that she had created Anatole France, and it is certain that by the influence which she exercised over him, he overcame his natural laziness and finally produced the wonderful masterpieces which will secure to him an immortal place among the ranks of French writers of modern times. She surrounded him with friends and admirers, and had very cleverly conveyed to the world at large the impression that Anatole France could only be reached through her and be seen at his best advantage in her house. With the help of an excellent cook she so succeeded in this enterprise until it became the thing to do to glance in at the Avenue Kléber every Sunday afternoon just to hear what was going on.

It was in the salon of Madame de Caillavet that for the first time Briand appeared on the horizon of Parisian life otherwise than as a demagogue, and wicked people used to say that it was Madame de Caillavet who had taught him how to tie his cravat in the proper way. Jaurès also liked to put in an appearance at these weekly gatherings, and every journalist of note belonging to the Republican camp considered it his duty to be seen there, seeking his inspirations either from Madame de Caillavet or from Anatole France, who invariably spent the whole of the afternoon standing on the rug in front of the fire and talking to his heart's content to a crowd gathered around him. He was at his best then, when he could give vent to his natural eloquence and the sarcastic nature of his mind, which, more often than perhaps necessary or comfortable, commented upon

Madame de Caillavet

the eccentricities and weaknesses of others. Anatole France was never unkind, but he could kill with a few words those whom he did not like more effectually than if he had shown himself quite openly uncharitable or unpleasant.

Madame de Caillavet died a year or two before the great war, which perhaps was a mercy for her, because she would never have been able to continue playing the part she had done for such a long time in Parisian society. For one thing she had lost Anatole France, who in his old days had suddenly transferred his allegiance to another shrine; her friends believed that this ingratitude on his part had hastened her end. She fell a prey to a sharp attack of influenza which carried her off in a few days, and with her disappeared the last political and literary salon in Paris. Then came the war, and Anatole France passed to his second phase, married a young wife, and having bought himself a house in the country near Tours, appeared but rarely among his Parisian friends, and, consequently, lost a good deal of his influence on the modern literary movement which followed the war. When he dies the last of the Burgraves will disappear.

The only salon which rivalled that of Madame de Caillavet since the establishment of the Third French Republic was that of Madame Edmond Adam, but as age and disillusion had overtaken her, she had retired more and more from the world and only opened her doors to her most intimate admirers. After the death of Gambetta, Madame Adam had

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no friend whose influence, either political or literary, could be compared to that of Anatole France, but she stood heads higher than the latter's Egeria, being gifted with infinitely more intelligence, a kinder heart and disposition, and a far less sarcastic tongue than Madame de Caillavet. Moreover, she was faithful and loyal to her friends. She certainly was the one who kept most constantly before the eyes of her country the idea of a *Revanche* for the disasters of 1870, and she contributed substantially to the conclusion of the Franco-Russian alliance. By one of those strange ironies of destiny, the Alliance, when it was finally signed, did not find the friends of Juliette Lambert in power, and she herself had ceased to be interested to the same extent as she had been before in political matters. Age had sobered her and, moreover, she had fallen under the influence of religious ideas which she had ignored in her younger days, when she had not drunk of the cup of human disillusion and disappointment. The world at last stood bare and naked before her with all its meannesses, petty envies and mistaken vanities, and it had so Hauseated her that she turned toward God in the hope of finding in Him a refuge from the wickedness of mankind. The triumphs of the great war had found her very calm and very grave, with the question ever on her lips, whether they had been worth what they had cost. Madame Adam is one of the greatest figures of modern France, and she towers over her generation with the prestige of genius allied to real kindness of heart and fidelity in affection.

Gambetta

Gambetta had been the greatest friend and the greatest illusion of Juliette Lambert. She had endowed him with qualities he had never possessed, and in her indignation at finding she had worshipped at the altar of a false idol she had brushed aside all the virile qualities of the famous agitator. She had never been able to reconcile herself to the change which had taken place, not in his opinions, but in his way of expressing them, and in his manners when the responsibility of government had been thrown upon his shoulders. Gambetta had a far more serious mind than he was ever given credit for, and none understood or realized better than he did that there are things one can say and preach when one is a leader of a governmental opposition, but which become impossible when one is a member of an administration, whether good or bad. Gambetta was certainly an ardent as well as a sincere patriot, yet he understood that concessions become necessary to every nation if it wants to be allowed to develop peacefully. He had never wavered in his feelings of dislike for Germany, and yet, when he became Prime Minister, he worked towards the establishment of a *modus vivendi* with the German Government, and he very nearly paid to Bismarck the famous visit which caused so much stir in the Press, when its intention gave rise to such a storm of protestation, that he had to give up all idea of journeying to Varzin. It was perhaps a pity, because Gambetta was the only man in France who could have persuaded the German Chancellor to adopt a more conciliatory policy

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towards his country, and who in return could have influenced the latter to look upon the future without the fixed idea that a new war, whether in a few months or in a few years, was merely a matter of time. Gambetta, who had been the greatest of Chauvinists, knew exactly the weaknesses of Chauvinism, and realized that, although most effective as a weapon of opposition, it becomes more than useless and even dangerous when applied to the government of a nation by those who are at its head.

In those days Chauvinism was a profession, just as being a Belgian, and consequently in want of help and sympathy, was a profession during the war, or being a Russian refugee and a victim of the Bolsheviks is at present. People thought it a point in their favour if they made a show of an exaggerated Chauvinism and tried to excite the passions of the mob against the so-called ferocious designs of Germany, who at that time did not nurse many ferocious projects, principally because its great leader knew very well that so long as the old Kaiser lived another Franco-German war, to say nothing of a European one, was entirely out of the question. But Gambetta knew it, and perhaps on that very account wished to succeed in establishing, if not exactly good, at least useful, relations with the country that had defeated his own. He looked upon politics with a very broad glance, and held the opinion that they had nothing to do with personal or national dignity. Madame Adam, on the contrary, was of opinion that honesty of purpose, integrity of character and dignity of

Madame Juliette Adam

manners were indispensable in public life as well as in private, and for this reason she never could understand the compromises which appeared quite natural to Gambetta. Towards the end of the latter's life their friendship had almost ceased, and they scarcely saw each other. Neither of them would yield or acknowledge being in the wrong, while, as a matter of fact, both of them were so in regard to one another.

At the time I am writing about, the President of the French Republic was in possession of a far greater but far less important position than is the case at present. People looked upon him with eyes brought up in the traditions of a Monarchy, and considered the Chief of the State as the first personage in the country, even when he was not exactly at the height and on the level of his duties as such. To-day this point of view has undergone a change, and the importance of the head of the Cabinet is certainly considered greater than that of the President, which explains perhaps why Monsieur Poincaré was not at all desirous of being re-elected as such.

This has come about as one of the natural consequences of the war, and probably it will not change again. But twenty years ago things were different, and people took very much more to heart than they would to-day incidents such as those which brought about the fall of Monsieur Grévy and the delinquencies of the latter's son-in-law. On the other hand, it is quite certain that although he could do so, it is doubtful whether Monsieur Millerand or any of his successors would ever dare dismiss the head of

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their Cabinet with the ease displayed by Marshal MacMahon when he wrote his famous letter to Jules Simon, which caused such a stir and brought to an end so many hopes of the Liberal party in France. Public opinion to-day would never permit them to do anything in that way, principally because public opinion no longer believes that a President of the Republic in France can allow himself the same acts of authority as a Sovereign. His position has become something quite definite; it is no longer shrouded in obscurity; his attributes have been defined, not by any written law, but simply by an educational process which the French nation, unknown to itself, has quietly but steadily been undergoing through the last quarter of a century.

Marshal MacMahon was gruff, brave, loyal, an officer in heart and soul, but a man who, in spite of his courage and real qualities, could never command sympathy although he deserved respect. He had no drawing-room manners, and called a spade a spade without blushing. He was always cramped by the difficulties of his position, placed as he was between the devil and the deep sea, owing to his old Monarchist associations and the need to preserve the integrity of the Republic he had sworn to defend. The French Legitimists accused him of having betrayed promises which he was supposed to have made to the Count of Chambord, but it is doubtful whether these promises had ever been given, and if so, if their nature had been understood: the Marshal was not particularly quick in his conceptions, and it took him

Marshal MacMahon

sometimes considerable time to realize what was going on around him. In any case, he resolutely opposed any Royalist manifestation in favour of Henri V, and the unfortunate Count de Chambord, who had been persuaded to come to Versailles, departed from it a sadder but a wiser man. On the other hand, the Republicans howled at what they called the deplorable weakness of the then Head of the French State for having allowed Chambord to go unmolested.

The great asset of the Duke of Magenta was his wife—the Maréchale, as she liked to be called, in preference to Madame la Duchesse. She came from the illustrious family of the Dukes of Castries, and did to perfection the honours of the Elysée. Nothing could be more graceful than the way she had of receiving people, in distinction to the sometimes rough welcome of her husband. As Monsieur Thiers, who was unsparing in his criticisms of the man who had succeeded him as Chief Magistrate of the Republic, once said : “ She was the redeeming point in the whole situation at the Elysée, because when she talked to you so pleasantly and so tactfully one forgot with what a fool one had to deal in the person of her husband.”

The Maréchal MacMahon was no fool, but he was something worse, a man who believed himself to be clever. He could never reconcile himself to the “ parade ” side of his functions, yet he would try to exert his authority far more widely than was permitted to him. A very wicked person who knew him well, once expressed the opinion that the President

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had never really known what he could and what he could not do, and that as soon as he had learnt it he had hastened to do something and dismissed Monsieur Jules Simon, because he had no footmen handy to discharge.

Thiers, MacMahon and Grévy, the first three Presidents of the Third Republic, had been compelled to resign their functions in turn. The first had retired under the sense of a great wrong done to him, which perhaps was the case, although not to the extent he imagined. The second had left in spite, like a sullen child who runs away from a game in which he knows he will be beaten. The third one had been almost hounded out of his place because of the misdoings of his son-in-law. None of the three had disappeared in a normal manner, and it was only many years after the Wilson scandal that a French President became insignificant enough to be allowed to end his term of office in peace but with all due honour and an escort of cavalry to take him home. But all the same, when one thinks things over one comes to the conclusion that more Presidents have grown weary of their functions and left of their own accord than have achieved the seven years' reign during which they are allowed by a kind Constitution to enjoy the delights of the Elysée and the official income.

It is a curious fact that the Dreyfus case affected Paris society to such a degree. Deep animosities replaced the urbanities of old, and people became ferocious in regard to each other because they held

The Dreyfusards

different opinions. Politeness disappeared, and certain social antagonisms became more acute than perhaps would have been possible under other circumstances. Paris was sharply divided into two camps: on one side the Dreyfusards, and the anti-Dreyfusards on the other. This cleavage, paradoxically, brought together people who otherwise would never have mixed, and it separated others whom one thought nothing could ever divide. In this way social distinctions and barriers disappeared, society became more and more mixed, and in their eagerness to win adherents to their opinions and points of view, people came to disregard differences of birth, breeding and good manners. Then it was that absolute outsiders came to be admitted into the domains of the strictest dowagers of the noble Faubourg St. Germain, and that scions of the oldest houses of the ancient French Nobility found themselves welcomed in the homes of staunch Republicans or women belonging to the *bourgeoisie* and the world of finance, which up to then had always—with the one exception of the Rothschilds—been kept outside the charmed circle of smart society. All these distinctions disappeared, and once they had done so it became impossible to bring them back again. French society became mixed—just like an American cocktail before the days of prohibition.

This famous Dreyfus affair had another result. It encouraged, not freedom of speech, but freedom of saying things and uttering words which no one would have imagined could be uttered in good com-

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pany. Under the influence of the general madness which pervaded the whole atmosphere of France, nice Frenchmen disappeared; there only remained the others.

Now all this is forgotten, just as much as Captain Dreyfus himself is forgotten. The poor man asked for nothing else, and on his return from his abominable exile had but one longing, and this was to be left alone. It is not worth while to revive this bit of well-known history, save to say that Dreyfus was a very quiet, unassuming, modest fellow, who never liked to talk about his misfortunes, and who tried as much as possible to escape public notice and attention. He had suffered far too much to seek any compensation, and he hated being made the object of ovations which only kindled the animosity displayed against him by a few fanatics who refused to acknowledge having been in the wrong. Dreyfus was a pathetic figure, but he behaved throughout his troubles with a dignity worthy of the highest praise.

It was through the Dreyfus affair that Clemenceau became great, and he was persuaded into taking a part in it by Zola, who was the one really sincere man among all those who started the campaign which at last brought about the vindication of Alfred Dreyfus. One of the first acts of Clemenceau when he assumed the Premiership was to present to the Chambers a bill authorizing the Government to convey the remains of the illustrious writer to the French Westminster Abbey, and lay

Pre-war Paris

them beside those of the other celebrities already resting in the Panthéon, which was done. After this "The Tiger" thought he had acquitted himself of every debt he owed to his friend.

Yes, indeed, pre-war Paris was an interesting place to live in. Life was a perpetual round of pleasure for the mind, the eyes and the senses. Whether at the Opéra at night or at the Bois in the afternoon, at smart restaurants or on the different racecourses to which society flocked with such *entrain*, all that one saw was beautiful, full of animation, gaiety, enchantment of every kind. Even the seasons were lovelier in Paris than anywhere else, and the Bois on a spring morning, with its trees and lakes and retreats, where one could meet all the celebrities of the day, was a sight such as no other European capital could boast. The French were a happy nation, and the shadows which had darkened them in the years following the Franco-German war of 1870 had softened; a new generation had grown up on whom the burden of the past disasters no longer lay heavily in the happy atmosphere in which it had been reared and in which it was living. Death, suffering, misery were things about which no one spoke. Paris was happy; Paris never imagined a day could arrive when it would cease to be so. Then came the blow.

As the tragedy unfolded itself it was but natural that the whole tone of French society should change, that it should lay aside the mirth of past hours, and strain itself to put forward only its best, strongest

Those I Remember

qualities of endurance and of patriotism. France was heroic through those four long and dreadful years that the war lasted, but when it was over there was nothing left of that butterfly existence which had made Paris the enchanting town we knew in our youth.

To-day Paris has fallen, like the rest of the world, a prey to the new-rich, the adventurous element of fashionable life. Its stately dames have closed their doors; its pretty women, most of them widowed, have forgotten their manners and the dignity which had distinguished them formerly; a frenzy for amusement has seized all those who wept so long and so continually during the years of war. They all want to forget, forget, and again to forget. Yes, Paris is changed, although the chestnut trees of the Champs Elysées are still there and blooming when spring sets in, although the Bois still sees couples walking its length, and the racecourses of Longchamps and Auteuil are still bright with pretty dresses and blue or pink parasols. The stage has not varied in its exterior aspect, but alas! alas! the actors are no longer the same, the comedy has become a farce, after having been a tragedy, and the curtain is now waiting to come down on a semi-comic, semi-dramatic burlesque, the performers of which are no longer Monsieur or Madame this or that, but Monsieur and Madame Tout le Monde.

CHAPTER VIII

AT THE COURT OF THE TSAR

OF Continental Courts the most picturesque has ever been that of Russia. Glittering ceremonial was the keynote of its movements, even though the "Little Father," as was the Tsar's appellation among the people, and his family were treated far more familiarly by St. Petersburg society than was the case with the Hohenzollerns in Berlin or the Hapsburgs in Vienna, probably because it liked to mix socially with the prominent families of both Russian capitals and seldom preserved an air of exclusiveness when it happened to meet their ducal compatriots in Paris, Biarritz, Nice, or any other fashionable international resort.

In Germany royalty held a special position among the lesser Grand Dukes of the federated States, while in Austria the Hapsburgs preserved an aloofness of icy etiquette, but in St. Petersburg pomp and paternalism were the dominant features.

In Russia the eccentricities of the Grand Dukes and Grand Duchesses excited less attention than they would have done in any other place, because everybody was more or less eccentric, liked to spend the whole of the night in some cabaret or other, listening to the famous gipsies without whom no

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entertainment of a Bohemian freeness was considered complete.

Members of the Imperial Family did not object to being talked about. Indeed, they rather enjoyed it, never suspecting that their revelries were leading them to the troubles they had to face later on. So long, however, as Alexander II, and especially Alexander III, were reigning, the élite tried to hide from the sovereign their various frolics.

With the accession of Nicholas II every fear of the monarch died away, and the Romanoffs themselves were the first who taught the public to disregard his commands, to pay no attention to his likes and dislikes.

Amusing stories began to be related concerning these Princes and Princesses of the blood royal, stories most of which were discreditable, and as such particularly enjoyed and eagerly spread. For instance, it happened one day that a certain Grand Duke strayed aside from the path of virtue and duty in the direction of an artiste of the French theatre, at whose feet he was supposed to worship, and invited a lady whose origin was less Bohemian than that of the fashionable actress to take a cup of tea with him in a private apartment which he rented in a back street of the capital.

As it happened, that apartment was in a house which had become the object of suspicion to the police, owing to the fact that a man belonging to the revolutionary party lived there. Consequently, detectives were stationed in the street with orders to

Grand Duke Alexis

take note of the people entering it. One of these zealous officials noticed that a tall naval officer was in the habit of coming three times a week and sometimes oftener to the house in question, and stayed there for a couple of hours. Not suspecting the identity of the officer in question, he reported the fact to his superiors, who came to the conclusion that the visitor was not an officer at all, but a man who had assumed the disguise in order to remain unmolested; and a raid was hastily organized.

The Grand Duke and the lady, suspecting nothing, were more than surprised when the door-bell of their apartment was rung violently and the door itself broken in. Neither wanted to reveal their identity, but their assurances that politics had nothing to do with their desire to drink tea together proved of no avail, and they were informed that they must proceed to police headquarters, where they could try to prove their innocence. The Grand Duke asked for permission to telephone to the Prefect of the Capital, but was rudely refused.

At this juncture kind fate, or perhaps a merciful Providence, interfered, in the shape of a policeman who knew the Grand Duke by sight, and whispered something into the ear of his superior officer. The latter began to doubt whether he had been right in refusing the permission asked to communicate with the Prefect, and told him he might use the telephone if he liked, which, as may be imagined, he hastened to do.

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voice of the Grand Duke, and calling his myrmidons to the 'phone, told them to wait for him before doing anything further. Then he hastened to the scene and set the prisoners free. But, alas for them! the good Prefect was anything but a discreet man, and the very next day the whole of St. Petersburg was talking about the incident with unfeigned amusement.

It was at that time also that people awoke to the fact it was not always an honour to entertain a Grand Duke or Grand Duchess, and that the impunity secured to these august personages by their exalted rank was sometimes a most unpleasant thing for those whom they honoured with their attention. One Grand Duke in particular came to be dreaded by every husband of an attractive wife and every mother of a pretty daughter. One of the latter evolved one day a very witty way of discouraging the Grand Duke's attentions to her *débutante* daughter. She had vainly tried to stop his dancing with her and taking her to supper at the various balls which they had attended, and when he expressed the desire to be invited to a dance which she was giving, she had told her daughter that she would never consent to it. The latter, however, had evidently forgotten to deliver the message, or had thought it better to forget it, and to the surprise of the lady and gentleman came up to her and told her that he had heard she was giving a ball, and hoped she would invite him.

This was equivalent to a command, which could

Grand Duke Andrew

not be disregarded; and the Countess X had no choice but to say she would feel extremely honoured if the Grand Duke attended the little festivity she was planning. The latter smiled at the success of his stratagem, but did not in the least expect to see his hostess receive him in state at the door of her house, and stick to him the whole of the evening, treating him with as much ceremony as if he had been the Tsar himself, even seating him at supper between herself and an old, very old, and very important lady, whose rank entitled her to the honour of being the neighbour at table of a member of the Imperial family. His Highness had no opportunity to exchange more than three or four words with the girl for whose sake he had begged the invitation, and for once he profited by the lesson which had been so delicately given to him, thereafter leaving Mademoiselle X severely alone.

The vivacious incidents in which this member of the Romanoff family was mixed up would fill a volume, and very few among them it would be polite to repeat.

Another Grand Duke, Andrew, was a very different character. Extremely careful of his means, he did not hesitate to flatter in a delicate manner the people from whom he had reason to think that he might obtain some financial or other advantage.

Andrew was the first Grand Duke who invited bankers and financiers to his house, and who thus got them to speculate for him on the Stock Exchange, where he made a large amount of money.

Those I Remember

He also wormed himself into the good graces of an official in his parents' household, a very rich man, to such an extent that the gentleman in question constituted him his sole heir in his will, excluding from it his next of kin, who forthwith began a lawsuit to have the will set aside. Before a decision in that matter had been reached the Russian Revolution took place, thus destroying the expectations of the Grand Duke Andrew in regard to this inheritance.

In one thing, however, this very prudent young man allowed his heart to get the upper hand of his reason, and that was in regard to his marriage to the famous Mathilde Krzesinska, the Polish dancer, who was looked upon as a power in St. Petersburg, and with whom for years he had been on terms of great friendship. The wedding took place in the south of France, whither most of the Grand Dukes, lucky enough to escape out of the hands of the Bolsheviks, had found a refuge, and the couple now live very quietly on the ample means of the former dancer in a villa they have bought not far from Cannes, where but few people are admitted, and which they seldom leave for any length of time. They are never seen in any of the gay places for which the French Riviera is so famous.

The Riviera, San Remo, Bordighera, and other Italian winter cities are full of exiled royalties who, under the orange trees and olive groves that make this coast such a land of beauty, dream of their past grandeur and magnificence. If we are to believe all

Grand Duchess Vladimir

that we hear, a good many among them are not sorry to have laid aside the pomps of royalty and to be free to lead the existence they prefer, instead of suffering the many restraints under which their former life was spent. But these are the younger generation; their elders cannot realize that what is past is really destroyed; they are slow to comprehend that they are no longer privileged beings to whom everything was allowed and nearly everything forgiven.

Death, however, has been busy among them. The Grand Duchess Vladimir of Russia, a lively, intelligent, intriguing and hardly puritanical woman, is no more. She used to boast that she had more admirers than she wanted and more dressmakers than she could employ.

Such women as was Marie Pavlovna of Russia are born but once in a century, who, whenever they appear, leave their mark on their surroundings and the circle of society in which they move. Far too clever for the position which she occupied, she could not be content with being the second lady in the land of her adoption, and never forgave her sister-in-law, the Empress Marie Feodorovna, for occupying the premier place. She hated all those in whom she thought that she saw possible rivals, and she was merciless in her judgments of her neighbour, forgetting that she herself was constantly giving to the world reasons for criticizing her. Her one aim in life was to amuse herself; and she achieved it almost until the end, when she had to fly from Russia under

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conditions of great discomfort and danger and after undergoing great hardships. She had saved part of her jewels out of the wreck, as well as a large slice of her fortune; and she was preparing to begin over again in Paris the lively existence she preferred to all others, when death stepped in and carried her off at a relatively early age. She was hardly cold in her coffin when her children began quarrelling over her inheritance.

Of the occupants of the throne of the Romanoffs, the outstanding figure among modern Tsars is that of Alexander III of Russia, the last real autocrat who ruled over Russia. The Tsar was an imposing figure, from the moral as well as from the physical point of view. He was a Romanoff for whom vice had never had any attraction, and his private life was pure from shadows such as had fallen on the careers of his brothers and uncles and even on that of his father. He had never indulged in coarse or vicious pleasures, and he had shown himself a husband above reproach and the best, kindest of fathers to his children. He, moreover, had been the first Russian Emperor to love Russia with a sincere affection. He never placed his own personal interest or advantage in the balance against that of the people over whom he ruled. A true Christian, he believed he had solemn duties to perform in life, and he tried to perform them, but he never considered himself as an individual above others, although he had such absolute consciousness of the grandeur of his position as a Russian Tsar. On the day he

Alexander III

ascended the throne he replied to the wishes expressed by his servants when they had greeted him for the first time as the ruler of All the Russias, with the traditional bread and salt offered on such occasions, that he would try to be a father to his people, a promise he faithfully and religiously kept. During his reign Russia reached a position such as it had never held since the days of Peter the Great and Catherine II. Alexander III, whose intelligence was most certainly limited, whose instruction had been sadly neglected, who had suddenly found himself saddled with responsibilities he had never expected would fall to his lot, and whom the death of his elder brother had suddenly raised from a relatively obscure position to that of heir to what was at the time one of the greatest European Empires, contrived to win for himself as well as for his country the respect of the world and the real affection of his subjects. His natural honesty alone had achieved these results and had carried him through the most trying situations with dignity and honour. He had been so profoundly convinced in his own mind that his country was great, that he contrived to make it so and to give it a prestige it had never possessed since the Crimean War had shaken the might of its Tsars.

At the same time Alexander III did not realize sufficiently that there was nobody to take up his work after he had gone, and perhaps out of the feeling that he had still many years to live he had not given himself the trouble to initiate his heir into the affairs of the government, but treated him more or

Those I Remember

less as a child, even when he had reached manhood. He had also, in his preoccupation to keep his family at a distance, not interested himself sufficiently in the doings of his brothers, uncles and cousins, and not realized that the bad example they were giving was undermining the respect of Russians as well as of foreigners for the Imperial House itself. Himself a moral man in the most narrow meaning of the word, it disgusted him to find himself compelled to think of the many infractions of the moral code of which his relatives were continually guilty, and he tried to put as far as possible from his mind the delicate question of the private life and conduct of the numerous Romanoffs who made Europe ring with the fame of their utter lack of the most elementary ethics. Moreover, he still believed that for his subjects, or at least for the larger number of them, the Imperial family stood too high and was too sacred for them to notice its shortcomings. He failed to see the tide of revolution which was slowly rising and to which these shortcomings would give a pretext for starting on its relentless course. He thought that so long as he lived this revolution would never break out, and he was right in this surmise, for he would always have been able to prevent its explosion by his sheer will-power and also because of the genuine affection toward him which he had inspired in his people, none among whom would have dared lay a hand upon him.

So long as he lived Alexander III represented something more than a mighty monarch; he was the

The Shadow of Revolution

incarnation of a principle, the principle of Royalty itself, of which he was the last scion worthy of the position in which his birth had put him.

The downward course of Russia may be said to have begun on the day he passed away, and the sceptre of the Romanoffs fell into the weak hands of his successor. Alexander III, the last descendant of the Terrible, Peter the Reformer, Catherine the Great and Nicholas I, with all his faults, had yet some real grandeur in his inflexible character. He was also the last one who understood his people, who loved Russia, and wished her to remain great. After he disappeared the veil fell over a whole period of that country's history, and a new one began, each page of which was stained with blood—Russian blood, unfortunately. The giant had stood alone, and will ever remain in the remembrance of those who knew him as the embodiment of strength and of a power which awed by the extreme simplicity with which it asserted itself, by the honesty and straightforwardness with which it ruled.

Another thing to the credit of Alexander must here be mentioned. In spite of the wild conduct of his relatives he and the gentle and lovely Empress contrived to make his Court quite exemplary in morals. Taken as a whole, there were very few scandals in St. Petersburg society outside of those of which the Imperial family were the heroes and heroines, and the few which took place were very quickly hushed up. Under the reign of his successor looseness of conduct became general, divorces

Those I Remember

numerous, and adventures of all kind in which well-known personages of society in the Russian capital figured and which kept people lively, gossip busy. St. Petersburg began to disregard the conventional, until at last the very backbone of the upper classes was broken, and, when the hour of danger and of sacrifice struck, they found themselves unable to resist the fury of the storm; they did not even die with dignity, far less confront their foes with courage and proud resignation to an undeserved fate. A more pitiful sight than that of Russian exiles dragging out their miserable existence in foreign lands has never been seen; beside it the French emigration at the beginning of the nineteenth century displayed real grandeur and haughty pride in its struggle against extinction.

It happens sometimes in life that one has curious premonitions in regard to the future. Alexander III certainly had them concerning Austria, in which he always saw an enemy watching for a moment to strike Russia a blow from which she would be unable to recover. He never trusted Austrian statesmen; he did not trust even the Emperor Francis Joseph, for whom he nourished such an antipathy that he sometimes forgot to accord him the most common usages of politeness or the etiquette which in those bygone days governed the relations of sovereigns with each other.

It is a curious and very little known fact that the very first spark which set the world on fire really dated from the time of the suicide of the unfortunate

M. de Giers

Crown Prince Rudolph of Austria. It took place, as everybody knows, on January 30th, 1889, in the midst of the winter season in St. Petersburg, which was promising to be exceptionally brilliant that year. When the news of the catastrophe reached the Russian Court invitations had been sent out for a ball in the Anitchkoff Palace, the private residence of Alexander III and of his consort, one of these balls to which just a few privileged people had been asked and which constituted one of the great events of the winter. The Foreign Office, at the head of which was M. de Giers, advised the Emperor to have that festivity cancelled out of sympathy for the calamity which had befallen Francis Joseph and the Empress Elizabeth, but the Tsar remembered that some years previously the Vienna Court had not postponed the marriage of one of its Archduchesses when a Russian Grand Duke had passed into a better world, and although, by the way, this could not be compared to giving a ball, he decided that the projected festivity should take place. M. de Giers implored him to change his mind, but it was of no avail; Alexander III did not easily go back on any decision he had taken, and, besides, the Tsarina, who was passionately fond of dancing, did not wish to forgo her favourite amusement. So, in spite of the efforts and remonstrances of the Foreign Office, the ball took place; but as a concession to the entreaties of his Minister the Emperor decided that mourning should be worn, and orders were sent for ladies to wear black gowns, which caused quite a flutter among

Those I Remember

them, as it was not the custom to appear in that sombre garb in public in Russia, and consequently new dresses had to be ordered in a hurry and at a great cost. But the Vienna Court took very much to heart this lack of sympathy with its sorrows, and old Francis Joseph never forgave what he termed a complete lack of decent feeling and politeness. From that day relations between the two Courts remained strained, and the Ball Platz never missed an opportunity of standing in the way of the Russian Foreign Office or frustrating Russian politics whenever it was possible to do so. Thus small incidents sometimes lead to great and even to appalling results.

CHAPTER IX

THE TRAGEDY OF ARCHDUKE RUDOLPH

THE death of the Archduke Rudolph, referred to in the previous chapter as having a definite effect upon later relationships between Russia and Austria, and being the far-off prime cause of the Great War, has always been veiled in mystery. What happened at Mayerling on that tragic night he spent with Marie Vetsera?

Before referring to this, however, permit me a reference to the Belgian King, whose daughter, Stephanie, was the wife of Rudolph.

Leopold II was one of the great friends of the Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna, who greatly attracted his roving eye. He led an easy, happy-go-lucky existence in which attentions to pretty women and care for his immense fortune formed the principal occupations. Leopold was a cynic who liked to boast of his cynicism and who carried it so far that he never would admit any disinterested motive to any human action or honesty in any man. He was always ready to sneer at what others held sacred, to laugh at what others admired, and to disdain what others believed in. Never expecting anything good in the world, he snubbed it and ruled it in turns.

Those I Remember

He was always careful, however, to choose his company. Sometimes this led to rather funny incidents, such, for instance, as his introduction to the old Duchess of Uzès, as proud an old dame as ever lived in France. The Duchess had more than once expressed herself with indignation at the King's conduct in living publicly with the famous Baroness Vaughan, and thus acknowledging his morganatic marriage with her, which, in the opinion of many of Leopold's friends, he would have done better to keep in the background. Leopold was perfectly well aware of these utterances, yet, when he happened to find himself in Cannes at the same time as Madame d'Uzès, he asked to be introduced to her, and showed himself so particularly amiable that she had to own that she had never expected the King to be so pleasant. When, indeed, Leopold asked her to lunch with him at the Casino, she actually accepted his invitation with alacrity.

The meal passed off very merrily, the King being in a particularly gracious mood, and the Duchess as well as the other guests could not help thinking him charming. When it was over, Leopold offered to show them through the grounds of the new villa he had just purchased on the Antibes road, and to drive them there. Never suspecting anything, they were only too delighted to avail themselves of this opportunity, so unexpectedly proffered, of inspecting gardens about which they had heard so much and which were supposed to be inaccessible to the general public and even to more select visitors.

Leopold of Belgium

Leopold's amiability never left him during the drive, and he seemed absolutely delighted to do the honours of his residence. He took them over the park, made them admire the lovely view over the sea from the cliffs, and finally led them to the drawing-room of the villa, where a tea-table was spread awaiting them, at which sat in solemn state, beautifully dressed, the King's morganatic wife, Baroness Vaughan.

Unabashed by the withering glances thrown at the lady by the Duchess and her companion, Leopold proceeded to introduce his guests to his consort, and then added, with a sardonic smile: "You must excuse my wife if she did not appear at the Casino to-day, but it is an old Belgian custom for the consorts of sovereigns not to eat in public places!"

Then, taking hold of a plate of cakes and other dainties, he offered them to Madame d'Uzès with satiric blandness. There was nothing left to the latter but to accept, but her rage may be imagined.

In spite of his desire to obtain for his morganatic consort some sort of recognition, Leopold did not attempt to force her down people's throats. He was far too clever not to see the numerous defects and lack of education of the girl, who, before he knew her, had been dancing in small theatres in Paris without even proving successful in the attempt to make a livelihood out of her legs. But he hated people to reproach him for his partiality, and he would have liked his personal conduct to remain unmolested by his subjects. The fact that such was not the case

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caused him to make the extraordinary will which was such a nine days' wonder for Belgium in general and for his friends in particular.

If it be that Leopold's son-in-law, Rudolph, was the initial factor in the events which culminated in 1914, with equal aplomb it can be argued that if this charming, clever and unbalanced heir to the pomp and bad luck of the Hapsburgs had been spared, it is likely that the horror of the great war would have been avoided. For Austria would never have become the humble servant of the Hohenzollerns, as was the case after his death.

Rudolph had a mind of his own, he always knew what he wanted, and he had in him the qualities that go toward the making of a great statesman. But the cruel tyranny exercised over him by his father drove him to seek consolations outside his home. He knew himself to be an object of suspicion, and he tried to forget, in the arms of one fair woman after another, all the difficulties with which he found his path beset.

The romance with Marie Vetsera was but one of many, which fact renders the more inexplicable the tragedy of Rudolph's suicide at its close, a tragedy the secret of which is still to be revealed. Some people say that in the archives of the Vienna Hofburg can be found certain documents throwing light upon it, documents which were sealed in the presence of the Emperor Francis Joseph, and carefully laid aside with strict injunctions not to be opened till fifty years after the drama of Mayerling. Whether this is true

Stephanie of Belgium

or not it is not possible to ascertain at present, though personally I do not believe in the story, because it seems to me, for one thing, that the old Emperor would not have cared to leave to posterity the possibility of unravelling the mystery that had surrounded the death of his only son, and for another that, if such documents were really in existence, the present Austrian Government would have been but too delighted to disclose their contents to the world.

Rudolph's consort, Stephanie of Belgium, had inherited a good many traits from the character of her father, whom she strongly resembled in features as well as in temper. She was supposed to be stupid, which was not at all the case, for she had a sharp sense of humour which she only repressed at the cost of a great deal of trouble. She had always hated Vienna, Viennese society, and the Hapsburg family, with perhaps one or two exceptions, one of them being the Archduchess Marie Theresa, who, very unhappy herself in her married life, was inclined to sympathize with the Crown Princess when the latter tried to air her wrongs, and win for herself the approval of the world by complaining of the many quarrels she had with the Crown Prince.

Touching the subject of these quarrels, I will here mention a fact which I believe is very little known outside a small circle of people. There is an idea that Rudolph committed suicide because he wanted to be divorced by his wife in order to marry Mademoiselle Vetsera. This is absolutely untrue, the more so that it was not he who had begged the

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Emperor to intercede for him before the Pope so as to obtain for him the release of his marriage vows, but the Crown Princess, who had attempted, through some friends that she had in Rome, to petition the Holy See that she was entitled to have her ill-assorted union dissolved; a fact which, when it became known to old Francis Joseph, brought about one of the worst fits of rage this choleric monarch ever had, and created between him and his daughter-in-law a breach that lasted as long as he lived. Of this the world knew nothing, for Stephanie, though given to understand that her presence was not welcome at the Hofburg, yet retained her rank, privileges and large income, because, no matter what he may have thought of her, Francis Joseph was far too careful of the reputation of the Hapsburgs to allow the public to guess that he disapproved of what the Princess had done. Rudolph had been officially branded as a reprobate, and the tradition was to be kept up at all costs, particularly after he was dead and no longer able to give it the lie.

Of course Vienna society had gossiped a lot about this tragic romance of the heir to the Austrian Throne and its awful end. But this gossip did not last any length of time, and Rudolph's memory remained far more alive abroad than in his native land, of time among its upper classes.

this tragic of the matter was that the high and alive abroad families who thronged the Hofburg on the night of a Court ball did not care to be reminded of an event which was so entirely different

Society in Vienna

from anything that had ever happened before. It shocked all its notions of morality and *bienséance* to think that the son of their Sovereign could have put an end to himself under circumstances of a nature to destroy in the eyes of the Austrian nation all the prestige of the Hapsburgs. Viennese society was far too frivolous and far too silly to be able to form an opinion on such a catastrophe. At the same time it was far too bigoted to seek excuses for the act, so it thought it better to forget the tragedy, the natural consequence of a state of mind so entirely confined to banalities that anything in the shape of shock could only stun it, but not give it the ability to find an explanation to a something which only appeared to be horrible because it had had for background an illicit love. That was all these noble dames and haughty knights could see in Marie Vetsera and Rudolph von Hapsburg's passion. They never gave a thought to the possibility that moral suffering could have accompanied it, moral struggles brought it about.

In general, Viennese society was not amiable; it did not smile on foreigners with any degree of urbanity. All it asked of one was to have birth and a long pedigree. Personal charm, instruction, learning or beauty was of no importance in those old days: if anything, they were embarrassing Viennese anything else. A felon, if he had had a beauty would have been received where an honest man such have been told to make himself scarce.

Vienna, although a charming town, was not a

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pleasant city to live in, for there was no place on earth where people gossiped more about trifles. The Viennese have been credited with kindness and cheerfulness, but this only applies to the lower classes, to the *bourgeoisie*. Society was silly, ignorant, haughty without being proud, loud to a degree, vulgar very often, and utterly oblivious of the rights of anyone else but its own. The Austrian aristocracy never read a book, never cared for art in any shape or form, did not understand anything about politics, and did not interest itself in anything except shooting innocent pheasants or partridges, or dancing now and then in the most proper way possible. It was absolutely antipathetic—a perfect contrast to the good and merry Austrian people whom it was to lead to a general slaughter, until at last the worm turned, and princes, counts and barons, who had really believed that they were in possession of the earth with a fence around it, found themselves one fine day deprived of their old privileges, of the titles which had been so dear to them, of the estates they had possessed for hundreds and hundreds of years. The blow must have been a terrible one, but the question is whether these people realized its full force or what it really signified. I must say that I doubt it. As a rule bigoted people never see beyond their own limited horizon, which perhaps is the secret of their continual serenity in presence of social convulsions which pass them by without ruffling the atmosphere of their self-content.

CHAPTER X

THE BERLIN THAT WAS

JUDGING from what we hear, Berlin is the city which has changed the most since the war, with the exception of St. Petersburg. This is not at all surprising to any who knew the German capital when it was at the height of its glory, because life in this residence of the Hohenzollerns was conducted upon such absolutist lines that when the Empire collapsed Society was bound to be engulfed in its ruin.

The more, indeed, I remember that old, old world, when I was young and looked upon the future with all the insolence of which youth alone possesses the secret—that wonderful world, all the people I have known, all the curious sights I have seen, the pageants I have witnessed—the more it seems to me that I am reading some extraordinary fairy-tale, some story which cannot be real, which cannot be true, which could not by any possibility have ever happened.

It is then that I realize all the tragedy of the great war, all the extent of the catastrophe that has overwhelmed the world, of the cataclysm that has destroyed traditions which we had all believed would survive us, prejudices that had seemed unconquerable and incurable.

Those I Remember

A new world has arisen out of these ruins—the world has made a clean sweep of the past and is trying to persuade us that it was not worth living in!

And yet this poor, so sadly misjudged old world was a nice one to live in, in spite of all the outcry its memory arouses, mostly from people who have never tasted of its joys. It was interesting in the sense that it had its centres, its prominent people around whom one gathered and from whom one generally heard remarks worth while being remembered: its pleasant customs in so far that they favoured familiarity among people belonging to the same set and banished outsiders. It was a comfortable world, in which it was possible to travel with ease, and to spend one's time reclining upon silk cushions without being troubled by the number of disagreeable things against which we find ourselves constantly knocking nowadays. Even taxes were gentle though annoying occurrences, and while we grumbled at them, yet they never prevented us from buying a new frock, or another hunter, or from going to Paris whenever we desired to do so.

In a certain sense it was a solemn world, over which solemnly presided customs which, as the laws of the Medes and Persians, "altereth not." Those who occupied prominent positions in it, by virtue of that fact, were compelled more than others to submit to them, and in their turn exacted from less exalted beings than themselves strict obedience to rules that could not be transgressed without creating an almost international scandal, because at that remote time

A Vignette

Society was essentially international. The same people used to meet in the same places, in the same drawing-rooms, at the same festivities; in London, Paris, Vienna, St. Petersburg or Berlin they gathered at stated intervals, and no one dreamed of asking of one's neighbour to what nationality he or she belonged. All that was requested of them was to be a gentleman or a lady, known and received at the Court of their own country, and consequently able to be admitted everywhere, to be eligible for the best clubs and welcomed to dinner in the best houses.

And another thing: Sovereigns were amiable people; they had been trained into amiability from their childhood, and taught to smile continually, even when bored. They had been instructed to remember faces and names, and to show intense interest in the things they did not care for in the very least. This made them pleasant creatures who, though occasionally dull, redeemed this defect by the many opportunities which they had to impart enjoyment to those whom their conversation had from time to time annoyed. You are always liked when you can give others good food to eat, excellent cigars to smoke, and the possibility to meet under the best conditions pretty women to flirt with or handsome men to fall in love with.

I have come across a good many of those crowned heads in my long life, and on the whole have never had any reason to complain of any of them. They were all of them so well-bred, so thoroughly educated

Those I Remember

into the place which they filled in the world, that one felt more or less sure no friction would ever arise to mar one's relations with them. Even when they showed their disapproval of this or that individual, this or that thing, it was done in such a well-bred way that most of the time it missed its mark, which, after all, was the best accident that could have happened.

In view of these facts it seems the more astounding that when the revolutions and upheavals brought about by the great war had dethroned all or mostly all the reigning houses of continental Europe and sent them into a relative obscurity, their good breeding, their perfect manners collapsed together with their fortunes. They suddenly became most commonplace personages, who in many a case did not even have the dignity of their misfortunes, but tried to make use of them by throwing to the four winds the old rules that had restrained them formerly, and trying to capitalize the notoriety which still clung to them. This was especially to be noticed among the younger scions of royalty, whose habits of etiquette had not yet become a principle.

I have therefore said little about the fallen royalties of to-day. They are not interesting; they do not interest me in the very least, nor do they interest anyone else. We must leave them to their fate, hoping it will not treat them too harshly.

During the last twenty years or so of last century three great dynasties ruled continental Europe—the Hapsburgs, the Romanoffs and the Hohenzollerns.

Empress Augusta

Earlier chapters have dealt with the first two; the latter now comes under consideration, and to it applies more than to the others the moralizings I have here inflicted upon my patient readers.

As well as the Hohenzollerns there were, of course, minor royalties of whom Germany had more than she knew what to do with; but one and all of them looked for their inspirations to Berlin and tried to copy what was done there with an almost religious fidelity. Berlin, especially during the last years of the reign of William I, became a centre of pilgrimage for everybody entitled to the right of wearing a crown, and as such offered upon certain occasions a really wonderful sight of men and women whose ancestors had occupied in the world a far greater place than they could ever aspire to themselves.

The Berlin Court was ruled with an iron hand by the old Empress Augusta, who was a great upholder of etiquette. She was a formidable personage when she appeared in public in her war-paint, her diamonds, laces, tiaras and, last but not least, her wonderful wigs. In the latter years of her life she could not walk, and had to be wheeled about in an invalid chair, which fact added to the general impression of dread which she produced, because the people whom she honoured with her attention were brought in turns to her, and had to bend over that chair when she talked to them. I use with intention the expression "when she talked to them," because no one was ever allowed to put in a word during a conversation

Those I Remember

with Augusta, whose volubility of language never left her. She had been trained to talk, and one could no more have stopped her than one could have stopped an express train. What she had made up her mind she ought to say, she said, and very often amazing mistakes were the result, about which, however, she was always kept in profound ignorance.

The Empress prided herself upon her literary tastes, and her affection for French literature, which—this must be conceded to her—she knew extremely well. She read most of the new books, and her favourite authors were those whose works appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. Maxime du Camp, whom she used to see every autumn at Baden-Baden and invited to dinner frequently, was her oracle, and she would dearly have liked to meet the Duc d'Aumale, whose history of the Princess de Condé she always praised, with perhaps more warmth than it deserved. Her great aim was to bring about a reconciliation between France and Germany, and most of the many political intrigues in which she dabbled were due to this ambition, which, however, she was never to see fulfilled. She hated Bismarck, but so clumsily that finally, to use the words of the great Chancellor himself, she did him more good than harm, and while trying to undermine his influence over the old Emperor, only succeeded in strengthening it.

The Empress was inordinately fond of society and liked to entertain. For one thing she considered it her duty; then it gave her the opportunity to see

Gossip!

everybody and to become initiated into the many incidents of social life in the Prussian capital. She was devoted to gossip, and her anxiety to become acquainted with the affairs of her neighbour was almost a disease. All her favourites—and she had many—knew that the best way to win her favour was by relating small scandals to her.

In this steeplechase for her approval amusing incidents happened. Thus, one day it became known that a lady belonging to the highest circles had been seen in the only music-hall which Berlin possessed, called Kroll's, which was not supposed to be visited by women of society. The identity of the lady in question was not disclosed at first, but only hinted at in whispers, because the crime, had it been established, would have been such a heinous one that people did not dare ascribe it to its perpetrator until absolute proofs of it had been produced. It was nevertheless said, on what was supposed to be unimpeachable authority, that young Princess X. had spent an hour or two sitting in Kroll's, listening to the excellent music which was generally given there, and it was added that she had not been alone, but that a handsome guardsman who was not her husband had been with her, and most probably had paid for the ices and French pastry which she had consumed, both pastry and ices being considered excellent in the aforementioned place of entertainment.

For about a week Berlin talked of nothing else but the incident in question, and the Empress became quite excited over it. At last Augusta decided that

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an example ought to be made of the lady, so as to prevent others from imitating her in her love for music performed elsewhere than at Court. Every Thursday evening concerts used to be given at the Palace, to which the cream of Berlin society was asked, and during which Augusta had the opportunity to make herself pleasant or unpleasant, as the case might be, to her guests. There was not a numerous company as a rule, so that she could openly show her likes and dislikes in such a way that everybody was made aware of them. At one of these receptions the Empress had the Princess X. called to her, and asked her in a loud voice whether it was true that she had been seen at Kroll's. To the intense astonishment of everybody the lady boldly replied that it was true, and that she had enjoyed herself very much.

"I am surprised, Princess, at your admitting such a thing," said Augusta in her severest tones. "Ladies in your position ought to know that they cannot visit such places without seriously compromising themselves. I am also surprised that your husband allowed you to do such a foolish thing."

"My husband had nothing to do with it, madam," retorted the Princess. "He was given no choice in the matter, because I was invited to accompany your Majesty's sister-in-law, the Grand Duchess of Weimar, who wished to attend the concert given on that particular night at Kroll's; and, as your Majesty is aware, a royal command cannot be disregarded."

Princess Charles of Prussia

Augusta then remembered that the Grand Duchess had told her she had spent an evening *incognito* at Kroll's, listening to the excellent music for which it was famous, together with some friends, and of course she saw her mistake; but in the meanwhile the whole room was giggling, and realizing the sorry figure which she made, she became furious and never spoke to the Princess again.

The Empress had a sister who was married to Prince Charles of Prussia, the old Emperor's brother, with whom she was in constant rivalry in regard to dresses, wigs and false teeth. Both ladies were fond of light colours and youthful attire, and spent hours in conference with their milliners, who tried in vain to induce them to wear more sober gowns and less provoking hats. They would not be persuaded, and loved to appear on State occasions wrapped in pale blue or pink draperies or Nile green frocks, with long wreaths of flowers trailing over them. They had dark and light wigs, the latter appearing generally at night, and when these were surmounted with diamond tiaras, feathers and other ornaments, the effect was truly appalling.

The Princess Charles had a hobby, a small tortoise, for which she had a great affection and which she carried about with her everywhere, even at balls and parties. One day she missed the tortoise and became very excited over it, going so far as to complain to her sister, whom she accused of having abducted the creature in some way or other. Augusta, who, by the way, hated the reptile, pro-

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tested, and an argument ensued, which was suddenly interrupted by shrieks of horror from the Empress when it was discovered that the tortoise, having probably mistaken her for its legitimate mistress, had crept in some way or other into her wig—right into it—so that it could not come out again. This wig was such a voluminous affair that at first its owner had not felt the intrusion, until at last she realized it by the queer sensation which had followed upon the tortoise taking liberties with the light chestnut curls amidst which it had elected its domicile.

A fearful scene ensued, and for something like six months Augusta would not speak to Princess Charles, whom she accused of having instigated the tortoise's familiarities with her headdress, while on her side the Princess asserted that it was a shame her sister had so thoroughly misunderstood the affectionate intentions of her pet.

She was a witty person, this old Princess, with a tact that carried her through more than one difficult situation. Her husband—an amiable man—was a great admirer of the fair sex, and was reported to choose always with great care his wife's ladies-in-waiting, and to be guided in this selection by good looks more than by anything else. One day one of those officious busybodies who make it their business to tell unpleasant truths to others, informed the Princess that her spouse spent a great deal of his time in the apartment of pretty Countess Seydewitz, then attached to her household. The old lady smiled, and answered with admirable unconcern: "Oh, yes,

Duchess of Weimar

I know it; you see, the Countess is such an excellent Italian scholar, and the Prince was always fond of Dante. I am so glad they can read it together."

Her informant would not be snubbed, so she went on mercilessly with her intention of making mischief, and inquired whether it was the story of Francesca da Rimini of which the Prince was fond.

"Oh, no," replied the Princess. "He is far too old to have any sympathy with Paolo. What he likes is Dante's description of the punishments inflicted upon different sinners, such as scandalmongers, for instance."

She cheerfully smiled as she concluded, leaving her interlocutor very much mortified at her rebuke.

This small incident shows that in spite of her affectations Princess Charles was really a clever woman, cleverer perhaps than her sister the Empress, of whom she was intensely jealous, and certainly more indulgent and kindly. In her way she was a curious personality, almost as peculiar as her sister-in-law, that Duchess of Weimar whose invitation to the young Princess to accompany her to Kroll's had roused the ire of Empress Augusta; and who, with a face which had never known beauty—and which she was clever enough to admit—the intelligence of a man of unusual ability, and the weaknesses of a vain woman, could be either delightful or disagreeable just as she felt in the mood.

Augusta disliked the Duchess as much as she could dislike anybody, and this was saying much; but at the same time she never dared show it, and

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though she would have felt furious had she thought anyone noticed it, at heart she was mortally afraid of this sister-in-law, whose sharp tongue no one could still, and who did not care in the least whom she criticized and whom she ridiculed, being as keen for the one as for the other.

These three ladies queened it over all the other German princesses, some of whom were of even rank with them but could not gather sufficient courage to hold their own in their presence. And in spite of their peculiarities they understood to perfection the art of holding a Court and of upholding the dignity of their high position. Few people liked them, still fewer cared to antagonize them, and when they died something of the old Germany of Goethe and Schiller disappeared.

There was, however, one figure in Germany who commanded alike the respect of friends and foes, and this was that of the old Emperor William. He had realized the greatest stroke of good luck a human creature can have—he had lived so long that his shortcomings had been forgotten, the more so that his great political and military successes had come to him when he was already very old.

Personally, he was exceedingly attractive and sympathetic, and it was impossible to know him and not to be under the charm of his exquisite manners, chivalry where women were concerned, kindness and benevolence towards everybody, provided that one did not venture to forget the respect owed to him as a Sovereign, because towards the end of his existence

Princess Elisa Radziwill

the Emperor had entirely forgotten that he was a man, and only thought of himself as a monarch, and a great one into the bargain.

Few kings carried to such an extreme the veneration for the principle which they represented, and for royalty as an abstract institution, and few kings have understood so well how to uphold its dignity—which reminds me of an anecdote.

He had married the Empress Augusta for reasons of State and in order to obey his father's commands, who had wanted to see him settled in life, with a wife whose rank and birth was equal to his own, thereby to put an end to a love affair he had had with his cousin, the Princess Elisa Radziwill, whom he had wanted to marry, despite the consequence of renouncing his rights to the throne.

It is remarkable that though his heart was engaged in this youthful romance—he never forgot it, but kept until his death, on his writing-desk, a miniature representing the object of his passion—he yet never thought of resisting his father when the latter positively forbade him to think of this union, and so he meekly led to the altar Augusta of Saxe-Weimar, with whom he was absolutely unhappy until his death.

The Empress, as is well known, was of a very intriguing disposition; more than once she came into conflict with her husband on matters of public interest, and very often also she committed blunders and mistakes which brought the Emperor to the verge of exasperation. He never rebuked her, but

Those I Remember

always bore her meddling with a patience that his friends could not sufficiently admire.

Once, however, he forgot himself in his distress at some particularly unpardonable indiscretion on the part of poor Augusta. This was when Prince Bismarck, who had always been the object of the Empress's indiscretion, came to ask William to put an end to his consort's exuberance. William replied that he could not do anything, or allow his Minister to do anything, because, after all, she was the Empress, and, as such, invulnerable to attack and impossible to rebuke.

"But if she were not the Empress what would your Majesty do!" inquired the Chancellor.

"If she were not the Empress," exclaimed William, "I should spank her until she cried for mercy!"

And this was the solitary instance when his impatience at his wife's indiscretions got the upper hand of his respect for the position she occupied, for the crown which she wore.

The last ten years of his life the Emperor held a position which was unique, not only in Germany but in the whole of Europe. He was the object of universal respect and veneration. His birthday, which occurred on March 22, was the occasion of the assembling in Berlin of almost every notability in Germany, with a good sprinkling of eminent foreigners, to present their congratulations to the aged Sovereign.

The Emperor liked these reunions and took pride

Last Moments of William I

in them; he would probably have been very much surprised if he had been told that the day would come when he would no longer be there to enjoy them. Somehow he had grown to believe himself eternal. A few hours before he passed away he reminded the Empress, who was sitting beside him, that March 22 was drawing near.

“And I will be no longer here to spend this happy day with you,” he added with a sigh of regret, the regret of the man who suddenly finds himself in presence of death at a moment when he little expects it.

The burden of his ninety-two years sat but lightly on the shoulders of the first German Emperor.

CHAPTER XI

AT OTHER GERMAN COURTS

LIFE at German courts, whether in Berlin or in Munich, Stuttgart, or other towns of minor importance, was entirely concentrated around the Court, its doings and sayings. German nobility cared for its Sovereigns, Grand Dukes or Princes, and had an inordinate pride in their number, importance and possessions. Rules no one dared disobey circumscribed daily existence.

This was in marked contrast to Russia, where Russian Grand Dukes considered themselves at liberty to do what they liked, and this right of theirs was acknowledged and respected by the whole of the Court society in Moscow as well as in St. Petersburg; while in Germany the many royal and semi-royal princes and princesses, of whom there were more than stars in the sky or grains of sand in the sea, lived in fear and trembling of doing anything derogatory to their high rank. Whenever royal sinners strayed from the paths of virtue, as represented by this etiquette, they were immediately recalled to it by various unpleasant things which happened to them: loss of rank, or money, or both of these pleasant adjuncts to their former lives. This fact accounts for the quantity of unequal marriages and unsavoury scandals which, since the War, have

Hide-bound Etiquette

contributed so much to the total loss of prestige by which royalty has ceased to be a semi-divine institution.

I do not mean that love affairs or debts, or racing and gambling adventures, were ignored by the Germans. Such things were heard of occasionally, but they were never exhibited in public, or spoken of, except in whispers; whereas in Russia they formed one of the foremost subjects of conversation wherever two or three people were assembled together, and were commented upon sometimes severely, sometimes favourably, but always openly and without any desire to hush them up.

No scandal was openly indulged in in Berlin, yet the subject of most conversations dealt with what was going on in the Royal and Imperial families, the scandals—for these happened occasionally—marriages, births and deaths which took place among them. Every occasion of the kind was celebrated in some manner or other, according to a fixed code of etiquette.

Certain families whose ancestry entitled them to the honour received the visit of the Empress or Queen upon certain occasions, such as the arrival of a new baby, the engagement of a girl, or the death of the head of the house. Others were honoured with the presence of the whole royal family at their balls and parties, and others, again, had the privilege of entertaining their Sovereigns at dinner. It was all settled in advance, like the change of the seasons, and it all happened at the properly appointed

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time; and whenever a baby appeared during the summer or a period of the year when the Court was not in town, it was considered almost in the light of an incongruity, the child being almost frowned upon as having deprived its mother of the honour of being kissed in her bed by the Empress and handed by her some hideous present which she hastened to hide in a lumber-room or dark cupboard, whence it nevermore emerged.

Continental Royalty, especially in Germany, was permeated with the idea of its own importance. It really and seriously believed that it had a great mission to perform in the world, and in consequence never allowed the slightest infraction of the rules it had decreed. It tried to remain respectable, to avoid debts and other things of the same kind, though in the case of the men it did not object to their forgetting the ninth commandment and letting the world know that such was the case.

Royal romances were things of frequent occurrence, and somehow the strictest of strict dowagers did not object; they simply ignored them. The shade of Louis XIV protected these transgressions, and even lent them a certain halo which never hovered over the love affairs of common mortals. Indeed, the latter were not allowed to have any love affairs—at least, not in Berlin, where the Empress Augusta, whenever she heard of one, hastened to spread the news everywhere.

There were, however, worse things than love affairs; a woman might, for instance, have literary

Louise of Tuscany

or musical tastes, or artistic leanings of any kind. Once a lady well known in Court circles wrote a book—of course, under an assumed name—but without being able to hide her identity.

The book was an innocent novel, but it was a book, and this was more than sufficient to arouse the ire of society, as well as the anger of the Empress, who for once departed from her usual reserve to the extent of not even responding to the deep curtsy which the lady in question made to her during the course of a reception at the Palace. It was one of the rare instances when Augusta forgot her manners; but then the crime had been so heinous that it had made her utterly oblivious to anything else but its enormity!

Looking back to-day upon these times, so near and yet so far from us, one wonders how people could have gone on living and feeling so perfectly happy in such a puerile atmosphere of petty interests, petty amusements and lack of intellectual pursuits. Yet they were happy and satisfied, and made the world a pleasanter place than it is to-day—at least, for the Germans, in whose social history it was a golden era.

As an instance of the censoring restriction to which I have referred is the sad story of Louise of Tuscany, the former Crown Princess of Saxony, and the cruel inflexibility with which Francis Joseph took away from her the title of Archduchess of Austria, and even her right to use the family crest and name, thus dishonouring her before the world, almost before

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her husband had divorced her, a divorce which he was compelled to get after this decision of the head of the House of Hapsburg.

In spite of the restraints of an archaic and narrow-minded Court conventionalism, there were yet a few eccentric members of one or other German dynasties who had contrived to set the world talking about them. The flirtations—to call them by a mild name—of Prince Charles of Prussia, the brother of the old Emperor William, caused no end of scandal in their time; and the vagaries of one of his cousins, Prince Adalbert of Prussia, had given rise to even more talk. This last-named personage was always the black sheep of the Hohenzollern family, of whom he was perhaps also the cleverest member. But he was never out of mischief, and mischief of a delicate nature sometimes, which, however, was never allowed to become public property, because at that time German newspapers never criticized royalty. Prince Adalbert was invited to take up his residence abroad, and he settled in Rome, where he was reported to have revived some of the extravagances of the old Roman emperors, though with less success.

It was always amusing to watch the efforts made by one of those august personages, styled Royal or Imperial Highness, to hide from the world any little infraction they attempted of the Spartan rules that governed them—their flirtations, for instance. I remember one or two cases when Berlin dowagers hinted at the partiality shown by such-and-such a royal princess for such-and-such a more or less pro-

Prince Adalbert

minent personage. They never went so far as to call a spade a spade, but indulged in comments of an essentially disagreeable nature in regard to the *penchant* of the princess in question for the society of the man supposed to have aroused her interest—comments which more than once resulted in compelling her to give him up, or, if she was already widowed, in marrying him, whether she had intended to do such a thing or not; marrying him morganatically, of course, but marrying him all the same. After which the unfortunate gentleman entangled into the knot of matrimony was appointed Chamberlain to his own wife, and never could aspire to being treated either by her or by the world otherwise than as her inferior.

There is one case which I have in mind which illustrates this subject, that of the Princess Frederick Charles of Prussia, the mother of the late Duchess of Connaught. She was a sweet lady, as beautiful as she was good and kind, whose only defect was an incurable and almost complete deafness. Her husband, the famous Red Prince, treated her most brutally, and more than once forgot himself so completely as to strike her. She bore everything with angelic patience and sweetness. When he took to leaving her alone in her apartments in the old castle in Berlin and spending most of his time in a shooting-box which he had in the vicinity of Potsdam, she did not, however, say that she regretted the fact, being frank enough to acknowledge that she was rather glad. She was a painter of no mean talent,

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and knew how to employ her time without seeking consolations in the conversations of the frivolous women who composed the cream of Berlin society. But she showed a decided preference for her Chamberlain, Baron von Wangenheim, whose artistic tastes coincided with her own, and she frequently invited him to her studio, where they discussed together art, literature and music, of which the Princess was extremely fond in spite of her deafness.

Prince Frederick Charles was warned by some kind friend that the world was talking about his wife and the baron, and of course he became furious. Yet for once he controlled his violent temper and went to his father to consult him as to what he had better do.

Old Prince Charles heard him in silence, then asked him : " Have you ever been unfaithful to your wife? "

His son, more than embarrassed by the question, muttered that such a thing might have happened once or twice.

" Then," said his father, " what right have you to criticize the Princess if she cares for the society of another man than yourself? Go home, my son, and forget all about it."

If history is to be believed, Prince Frederick Charles listened to his father's advice and did not interfere with his wife's preference for the society of Baron von Wangenheim.

Frederick Charles died a short time afterwards,

Prince Frederick Charles

and then began the Princess's troubles. Everybody she knew, from the old Empress Augusta downwards, declared that it was her duty to marry the baron. She was told so in the most peremptory manner by her aunt, her cousins, and all the Hohenzollern family, with the one exception of the Crown Prince and Princess, who did not think themselves called upon to interfere in the matter.

Now neither Baron von Wangenheim nor the widowed Princess Frederick Charles had the least wish or intention whatever of taking each other for better or worse, and they were exceedingly annoyed by this determination of the world to compel them to do so.

The Princess even went so far as to ask the old Emperor William, her uncle, to allow her to dismiss the baron and take another gentleman to look after her affairs and attend upon her, when to her horror she was told that such a thing could not be, because it would only lead to a scandal and to the world saying that either she was a coquette who had only wished to amuse herself, regardless of consequences, or that the baron had declined the honour of becoming the morganatic husband of a Princess of Prussia. The Emperor had no intention of forcing his niece to marry a man she did not care for, but he must insist on her retaining him as her attendant and preventing gossip smirching her name with useless suppositions and surmises.

The Princess had to submit, but after this episode she went abroad and was but seldom seen in Berlin.

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She took to spending her winters in Rome and in the south of Italy, and the Prussian Court did not see much of her. But until her death, which only happened in 1906, Baron von Wangenheim remained with her as master of her small household, and when she passed away he was bitterly censured for not wearing mourning for a longer period than the time required by Court etiquette. People said he was a heartless man, and ungrateful into the bargain, and no one in Berlin would be persuaded that he had not been married morganatically to the Princess whose faithful attendant he had been for so many years.

There was another royal lady who, of stouter fibre than poor Princess Frederick Charles, had the courage to brave public censure and its stings in her desire to avoid the, in her opinion, greater evil of becoming the wife of a man she did not care for. This was the Duchess Alexandrine of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, born a Princess of Prussia, the daughter of Prince Albert, a younger brother of old Kaiser William I. She was an energetic and clever woman, whose great misfortune had been to have been married when still a mere child to a man whom even his best friends admitted was an unmitigated brute. When a kind fate had removed him from the world, his widow did not try to appear sorry, and did not even attend his funeral. They had been separated for a number of years, and when the Duchess heard that she was free at last she proceeded to arrange her existence upon far more comfortable lines, for

Alexandrine of Mecklenburg-Schwerin

during his lifetime she was perpetually worried in regard to money matters, as the Duke generally contrived to divert most of her personal income to his own uses.

Of course, the Duchess had a Chamberlain in attendance upon her, as had all the other Prussian princesses. He was an amiable man, who had, however, one weakness, and this was to have fallen in love with his royal mistress. When he saw her free he forgot himself to the extent of falling at her feet and imploring her to become his wife; but Alexandrine had a will of her own, and rejected his offer. The unfortunate man would not be daunted, and he proceeded to enlist the sympathies of the old Empress Augusta, who sent for her niece and did her best to persuade the latter that it was her duty to marry Count von X. The Duchess became very angry and refused again, saying that she did not see any reason for doing such a thing, at which the Empress retorted that it was the only means to shut the mouth of the world which believed that she had been for a long time in love with the Count.

“Well, then, let the world go on thinking so,” retorted the Duchess. “I much prefer being considered the mistress of Count von X than having the misfortune to be his wife.” And, returning home, she wrote the following letter to the gentleman in question :

“SIR,—I hear that people are saying that you are my lover. Let me assure you that these rumours will not affect my determination not to accept you as my

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husband. Rumours die out in time, a husband lives on. I prefer rumour and my liberty to a good reputation and the necessity of having you sit opposite to me at dinner for the rest of my natural existence. I hope that at last you will accept my decision and send me your resignation from your functions as master of my household, thus relieving me from the painful necessity of dismissing you from my service."

The letter was successful, and the Count disappeared from the horizon. After that the Duchess was left in peace to enjoy the pleasures of an existence in which husbands had no part.

Among the original figures of twenty or thirty years ago, whose sayings and doings were of interest to the fashionable world of the numerous small German capitals, that of the Duchess Adelaide of Schleswig-Holstein, the mother of the late German Empress Augusta Victoria, was one of the queerest. She had been a beauty in her youth, though this had only lasted a short time; indeed, she had faded quicker than a rose could do, perhaps owing to the small care she took of her personal appearance as represented by clothes and *per contra* the extreme care she bestowed on keeping herself clean. Her whole time was spent in either washing herself or her pocket handkerchiefs, which she insisted no laundry could finish to her satisfaction. This love for hot water bordered almost on insanity, and, indeed, there were doctors who affirmed that the Duchess's mind was not a well-balanced one, to put it mildly. The fact was that she had the fixed idea

The Duchess Adelaide

she was dirty, and at all odd times of the day and night she used to rush to her bathroom, plunge herself in, and remain there for an hour and sometimes two, rubbing conscientiously every part of her body, after which she would sometimes immediately begin the work again, under the pretext that she had noticed a speck of dust falling on her from the ceiling.

This mania increased with years, and the last two or three before her death the Duchess ceased to interest herself in anything else but this ablutionary care of her person. Her children vainly tried to reason with her; nothing availed. Indeed, they were seriously contemplating putting her into an asylum, when she solved the question by dying from pneumonia, which she insisted she had caught because her room had not been cleansed from germs as carefully as it ought to have been.

CHAPTER XII

IN THE DAYS OF EMPEROR FREDERICK

THE most remarkable figures in Berlin society of their day were most certainly the then Crown Prince and Princess, destined to be Emperor and Empress for a matter only of months. They were remarkable because so utterly different from their contemporaries, from their surroundings, from the prevailing atmosphere of German egotism, meanness, petty animosities and puerile pleasures. The Crown Prince seemed to me never to have been a happy man except in his family life. He always laboured under the sense of the difficult and false position in which he found himself, which arose partly from his father's desire, partly through circumstances over which he had no control. He was an ambitious man, although not with military tastes, and he was a grasping man in the sense that he was deeply imbued with the characteristic greed of the Hohenzollerns, yet, with him, it was a civilized greed, inasmuch as he would never have committed anything mean or unworthy of the great gentleman he was and always remained until the end of his life. At the same time he would always have held and defended those possessions which his fathers had grabbed or earned, and he was a far greater Imperialist than the old

Crown Prince Frederick

Kaiser, who had only accepted with reluctance the Imperial Crown which had been offered to him in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles, and who had never cared for the new dignity of Emperor he had been almost forced to adopt. In the secret of his heart he loathed the Imperial state, as he knew that it took away from him some of his prestige as King of Prussia, which he considered had descended to him through the grace of God.

William I was above everything else a Prussian, and his Hohenzollern pride made him cling to the remembrance of his ancestors, those Margraves of Brandenburg who had made Prussia what it was. He did not in the least care to be considered as the head of all the small German Sovereigns over whom his Imperial dignity obliged him to preside, because he thought that his position as a Prussian monarch was infinitely superior to everything else on earth, even to the diadem once worn by Charlemagne and Frederick Barbarossa.

With the Crown Prince it was very different. He believed that the Imperial dignity acquired by his house was deserved by its merits and its fitness to rule over the whole German Empire. He would gladly have obliterated the other States out of which the whole fabric of the Empire was built, and while his father affected to call himself King and the Empress Augusta Queen, never speaking of her as anything else, the Crown Prince never omitted the new title when mentioning his father or mother, and was exceedingly angry if by any chance anyone for-

Those I Remember

got in talking with him to call him Your Imperial Highness.

He was not in the least haughty ; only proud of his position, eager to have it recognized by everybody, and determined that when he ascended the throne he would do away, once and for all, with the title of King of Prussia, which reminded him of the times when his country was considered as of no importance whatever. His ambition was to make himself accepted by his people and by the whole world as an Emperor, the Emperor of Germany, not the German Emperor, as, to his disgust, Bismarck had decided the old Kaiser should be called.

With it all the Crown Prince was a liberal by inclination and conviction, and absolutism as a means of government was perfectly abhorrent to him. He would have liked to introduce a constitutional government after the model of the British one. His was a very cultured mind, one which had given much attention to all the governmental problems not only of his time but of the past. He would most certainly have been a model monarch had it been given to him to reign in reality instead of merely occupying the throne for one hundred days, as was, unfortunately, the case. He had drawn great plans as to what he was going to do on ascending the throne, plans which it must have broken his heart to relinquish.

From the day of his marriage his whole attitude had been one of opposition to his father's government. Yet he was such a real patriot at heart that

The Prisoner of Doorn

he would probably have endured the despotism of Prince Bismarck with patience and even respect had he really reigned, and moreover he carried to the utmost limit the characteristic Hohenzollern gratitude to those who had helped them to become great. Much as he disapproved of the methods of the Iron Chancellor, he would nevertheless have always treated him with respect, and even shown him some affection, because he would never have forgotten what he and Germany owed to him. In this the Crown Prince was very different from his son, who, indeed, failed to resemble either his father's or his mother's family.

I heard once that during a heated discussion between the then heir to the German Empire and his firstborn, such as during the last years of Frederick III's life used to take place more often than would have been desirable, the young and impetuous William allowed himself to tell his father that he did not understand what it meant to be an Emperor, an insolence to which the victim of it replied with the very characteristic words, which, seen by the light of subsequent events, appear almost prophetic, "You, my son, do not understand what it is to be a man!"

Man, Frederick William was, with all a man's weaknesses, but also instincts, generosity of heart, and honest, if sometimes mistaken, judgments. He had great lines in his character, and he would have lived up to them. On the throne he would have remained the same fine man he had been in his long

Those I Remember

equivocal position as heir apparent, who at nearly sixty years old had been kept outside public affairs and treated like a little boy. He was an honest man, and a good one also.

In Berlin the Crown Prince was not liked, and, placed as he was between an old father who had become the idol of the German nation and a young son in whom that nation saw a future conqueror as well as a great man, he had bitterly felt the disagreeable conditions of this anomalous situation and resented it, perhaps more than he ought to have done. That he was impatient to reign is impossible to deny, and he fretted at having to wait so long for the day when he would at last be master. This made him irritable, and no doubt hastened his death, by leaving him too feeble to fight against the dread disease which finally carried him off to an untimely grave.

The Crown Princess was of a very different character to her husband, but she was also ambitious, even more than he was, and she had more energy, more determination in her nature, but also more impetuosity, a keener sense of injury, and although she forgot, she sometimes did not forgive, which was a pity, because it affected her way of looking at things as well as at people—it gave her a certain harshness which created in those who did not know her well a false impression as to her personality and turn of mind. She was what the French call *entière* in everything, made out of one piece, and she did not admit compromises either in politics or in the daily routine of life. With her right was right and wrong

Empress Frederick

was wrong, and she could not bring herself to believe that sometimes man was the victim of circumstances over which he had no control.

An admirable woman, a more than admirable wife, and a devoted mother, the Empress Frederick yet lacked that softness which the majority of the public requires from those above it in social position. She could not flatter, and she showed her likes and dislikes in an abrupt way which could not fail to make her enemies. But she was honourable, she was straight, she was absolutely great and noble in her thoughts, in her aspirations, in her hopes, in her actions. She could not have committed a mean act, and she was a faithful friend to those she loved, herself a lovable person to the people who had been able to pierce the cuirass of steel which but too often, alas! she wore, and who had realized the treasures of kindness, of straightforwardness, of truth and of courage which distinguished her.

It was impossible to remain indifferent to the Princess Victoria; one had to love her or to dislike her intensely, and she was so entirely British in her tastes and turn of mind that it was no wonder the Prussians, among whom she was brought to live when still a mere child, should have failed to appreciate her and should have wounded her at every turn, until at last she discovered that a gulf which nothing could fill divided her from them and would divide them to the end.

The life she was compelled to lead at the German Court wearied the Crown Princess. She did not care

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for Court ceremonies, and the requirements of etiquette simply bored her. She would have liked to be left free to see whom she would, to choose her friends, to go about without being continually escorted and followed by someone or other. She hated restraint and she hated gossip, which accounts for the strained relations which at one time existed between her and her mother-in-law, whose greatest delight consisted in keeping herself informed as to all the things which did not concern her in regard to her neighbours. Princess Victoria despised her for this propensity to intrigue, and certainly, until she had come to know the world better and to understand something of the difficulties of life, there was neither love nor sympathy between her and the Empress. Thereafter she became more indulgent and treated with less harshness the innocent weaknesses she had condemned with such asperity in her younger days.

In regard to politics the Crown Princess, as could have been expected, was even more liberally inclined than her husband, and this, of course, reflected upon the opinion which the Prussian Court formed about her. The Junkers, who ruled in Berlin, reproached her with wishing to impose a British constitution on their country, a ridiculous accusation, by the way, because even if she had nursed such an insane idea it would have been impossible for the Crown Princess to carry it out. What no one ever gave her credit for was the fact that she had become a sincere German at heart, and that she was immensely proud of her position as future Queen and Empress of her own

Her Temperament

father's fatherland and the country over which she hoped her husband, and later on her son, would reign. She had felt immensely happy when the Crown Prince had been acclaimed as a hero on his return from the two wars in which he had commanded an army, and had gone to meet him with a mixture of joy, thankfulness and exultation which had had something extremely touching about it. To accuse her of not caring for Germany was doing her a great wrong, a wrong which she resented, as well she might, and it cannot be wondered if she sometimes showed the irritation which she felt at the stupidity of the reproaches an ignorant crowd threw at her without reason or sense.

Queen Victoria's eldest daughter had a character built on great lines, but at the same time it was easy for those who knew her well, and who loved her, to realize that she could at times show herself extremely unpleasant in regard to people for whom she could feel neither sympathy nor respect. She never in all her life understood the meaning or the necessity of compromise. This was very admirable, but it was not lovable—at least, not for those who, while desiring to enjoy her good graces, had no means to win them because they could not accept her theories or recognize her opinions as worthy of consideration. The great mistake which separated her from the country where she had found a home, and over which she was to reign for three months, was that it had failed to appreciate her, and she failed to see that this proceeded from the fact that she had

Those I Remember

wounded it by always attempting to impress her new country with her own superiority.

The Crown Princess had nursed great dreams, and it is probable that if circumstances had been different, and if she had ascended the throne under normal conditions, she would have succeeded in dissipating all the prejudices which existed against her. But she had to step aside and see her cherished hopes disappear, together with the husband whom she had loved so passionately, and the wall which the efforts of her enemies had built between her and the German people was never thrown down. She always remained for them the foreigner, the Englishwoman, and she carried to her grave the reputation of having tried to make the German Empire her husband's efforts had helped to build up, a subordinate vassal of her own country, for in those days England was intensely disliked in Berlin, and Prussians were continually taught to consider the English as the most serious enemy they had, anxious to snatch away from them the military laurels as well as the commercial advantages they had won after such a long and terrible struggle. She was called the Englishwoman—"die Engländerin"—just as Marie Antoinette had been called the Austrian and the Tsarina Alexandra of Russia the German. Nations as well as individuals are absurd in their prejudices and cruel in their judgments.

In her private life the Crown Princess was one of the most delightful creatures one could meet, and her conversation was not only instructive and enter-

Appreciation of the Arts

taining, but could also be humorous, full of fun, and easy to follow. She had read enormously, perhaps too much, because in her eagerness to keep herself informed as to the literary movements of Europe she had sometimes skipped too hurriedly books which would have deserved to be studied at leisure and with care. But she had a wonderful memory, and could remember so well what she read, even casually, that it was possible for her to discuss it later on. Very fond of art, she was yet not a real artist, her appreciation of a picture, a poem, or a piece of sculpture being based on what she had heard about it through people on whose judgments she thought she could rely. She did not feel the beauty of a painting and she was not impressed by beautiful music, yet she understood the value of music and the merit of a picture, but in both cases it was the technique she had in view, and she never allowed herself to be guided by her personal feelings or emotions. As a matter of fact, she was not emotional, although very passionate, very enthusiastic, very spontaneous in her actions as well as in her thoughts and words, a curious mixture of genius and of incapacity in the realm of sentiment.

She had a wonderful control over her character, a control entirely acquired during the last years of her life, when the shadow of the great and everlasting night had begun to fall upon her. Her endurance and heroism during the excruciating sufferings of her long illness were beyond praise and reached at times the superhuman. She fell, like the Queen she was,

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with dignity and grandeur, after forgiving what for others would have been unforgivable with serenity and faith in the mercy of the Almighty.

One of the last times I saw her we were talking of England and of Westminster Abbey, with its monuments, when she suddenly asked me whether I remembered an inscription on one of its tombs containing the Latin words, *Humanum est nescire et errare*. In saying the words her face became suddenly illumined with something which was nearer real beauty than I had ever seen in it before. She also had known what doubt and mistakes were, but she could at last, with full and perfect faith in her Creator, say that her mistakes had never been voluntary ones, that her doubts had never proceeded from her heart, although her reason had perhaps welcomed them. "*Nescire et errare*," yes; and yet one might have had engraved on her tomb the words of the old epithet which can be seen to this day in a ruined church of the Order of St. John in the island of Rhodes on the grave of a Count of Flanders: "I have loved, I have sinned, I have suffered; have mercy on me, oh my God."

The great misfortune of the Princess Victoria was not that, according to the expression of Carlyle, "she had been born in great times, and had had no greatness in her to meet them," but that, having been surrounded by great men, she had had even more greatness of character than they had ever possessed. She was infinitely superior to her surroundings, both intellectually and morally, and this was the one great

Relations with William II

failing for which she was never forgiven, for which she was hounded down to her death, and for which she was assailed with reproaches long after the grave had received her.

The relations of the Empress Frederick with her son, who later on was to become William II, were often discussed, and many rumours have been circulated in regard to them. The fact of the matter was that they had never got on together, their natures being at the same time too much alike and too dissimilar ever to agree. The now exiled William was mean, ungenerous, and very capable of a base action under provocation or even for the sake of personal advantage. The fact of the matter was that there existed a perpetual rivalry between the Crown Prince and his first-born.

Ever since William reached the years of manhood he had tried to supplant his father in the affections of the old Kaiser and had very cleverly exploited the antagonistic sentiments of Prince Bismarck against Frederick.

As an instance of what he could do I must recall the following incident. At the time the Chancellor was trying to pass through the Reichstag a law dealing with the expulsion from the Prussian territory of certain foreign elements who had settled on its frontiers, the Crown Prince had expressed himself in energetic terms against this decision, and with the desire to learn the opinions of the liberal parties composing the opposition in the Imperial Parliament he had invited the leader of the Nationalist party in

Those I Remember

the Reichstag, Dr. Richter, to come and see him so as to discuss the situation with him. This interview took place in secret, and it was supposed that no one outside two or three people would know anything about it. Now by some kind of indiscretion, probably that of a servant, the thing reached the ears of Prince Wilhelm, as the future Kaiser was called at the time. What did he do? He immediately went to Prince Bismarck and acquainted him of the fact, with the result that the Crown Prince was summoned by his father and told most disagreeable things about his conduct in daring to receive in his house a man who was fighting the Government in Parliament and in society. Of course, discreet inquiries were instituted as to who could have enlightened the Sovereign as to an incident which had been hoped would remain a great secret, and the culprit was soon discovered. It was then the turn of the Crown Princess to speak with her offspring, and the scene which took place between them was as violent as it was unpleasant. Victoria never forgave her son, and he never forgave his mother, for having found out how utterly meanly he had behaved in regard to her and to his father.

There are a few men, or rather there have been a few men, in the course of history whose gigantic individuality filled a whole epoch and communicated to it something very akin to fear, which the world amused, or rather cheated, itself into calling respect for their person. Such were Cardinal Richelieu, Oliver Cromwell, Napoleon, and Prince von Bismarck-Schönhausen, the first Chancellor of an Empire

Bismarck

which was to survive its creator and founder less than a half-century. This remarkable man, an undoubted giant among all the great politicians of a time when they certainly were cleverer and more gentlemanly than many of the so-called statesmen who decide nowadays the destinies of nations and indirectly of the world, this Colossus—for he was one—was the dominant factor in the politics of Europe and at the same time the one great factor in German life and in Berlin society. He remained so, even though the last years of his public career were spent in an almost complete solitude, out of which he only emerged when, embittered by his dismissal from office, he thought he could once more throw the weight of his experience and influence into the arena of German political strifes and discussions.

With all his immense genius he had not foreseen the possibility of his ever becoming useless as a minister or as a statesman, and his quarrel with the then young and impetuous William II came upon him as a complete surprise. He had sincerely believed himself invincible in his position of Prime Minister in the land he had contributed to make great, respected while feared by all its neighbours, and he had never admitted to his thoughts any idea that a day could come when, in his turn, he would be dismissed from office with the same ease with which he had told others to go. With all his acumen and his knowledge of life and of the human mind and character, he had been entirely mistaken in his appreciation of the young Kaiser who was to destroy

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all that he had done and created, and the only wonder is that he survived the shock of his discovery of the latter's black ingratitude.

During the whole of the reign of William I and the short one of his son and successor the gigantic personality of Prince Bismarck entirely dominated foreign as well as internal politics. He was the most interesting individual in Europe, and strangers coming to Berlin were more eager to see and meet him than of being presented to the Sovereign, who counted very little in their eyes in the presence of his formidable Chancellor.

Bismarck, although pretending that he did not care in the very least for the homage of the crowds, yet would have been very angry if he had had any reason to believe that the interest he was exciting everywhere was diminishing or even fading. He wanted absolutely to remain on the stage until death drove him from it; this is why he conducted himself with such a lack of dignity after his disgrace; this is why he failed to understand that if he had only kept silent, instead of pouring the history of his wrongs into the ear of every friendly or unfriendly journalist who asked him to air his views, he would have caused William II far more embarrassment than he did by his violent invectives against his person.

But what is a fact is that the whole atmosphere and landscape of Berlin changed after Bismarck had disappeared from its horizon. For a few days, or rather hours, the man in the street felt that some-

Bismarck and William I

thing great had disappeared. Then another feeling replaced this sense of loss, a feeling of relief at the end of what after all had been one of the most tyrannical domination of one individual over a whole nation ever known. To use a definition employed at the time by a person who had known well the Iron Chancellor: "There had been no Germany while Bismarck had been at its head; there had only been Bismarck and nothing else."

This judgment, although it may appear excessive to those who did not live at that time or know Berlin during the last years of the nineteenth century, was yet absolutely true, and it was shared by men whose public standing and position compelled them to work under the Chancellor or together with him, such, for instance, as Prince von Hohenlohe, who in his memoirs makes many allusions to this swallowing up by Bismarck of everything and everybody that was not himself and not allowing any superiority to emerge in case any individual might try to emulate or rival him, either in the opinion of the world or in the affections of his Sovereign.

Bismarck, strong man that he was, yet had one weakness, and this was his genuine, true, devoted attachment to the old Kaiser. He did not hold the latter's intelligence in high respect—he often accused him of weakness or obstinacy, two traits of character which often go together—but he loved him almost passionately, and the tears which he shed when he stood beside the death-bed of William I were probably the only sincere ones he had ever shed.

CHAPTER XIII

WHEN THE KAISER RULED

AFTER Bismarck's dismissal the general tone of Berlin society began to change. People left off fearing anyone, and criticisms of the Government, which had never been heard so long as he had been at the head of affairs, except in a discreet manner and under the seal of silence and discretion, began to pour from everywhere. The new Emperor himself, William II, was continually discussed, and every action of his, whether good or bad, was commented upon in anything but a kindly way.

The old Prussian aristocracy, for some reason or another, thought itself neglected by the Sovereign, and took to sulking in its country estates, appearing but rarely at Court, so that quite a new class of people, infinitely smarter, more elegant, and less dignified than those who had composed the courtiers of William I and of his consort, came forward and became the dispensers of social hospitality in Berlin. A few scandals, such as the famous anonymous letters that caused such stir at the time when they came to ruffle the serenity of Berlin dowagers, took place in quick succession, and robbed the Prussian Court of much that had been perhaps old-fashioned, but eminently attractive in olden days. The familiarity which had been manifest in the relations of the

1890-1910

Monarch with his faithful retainers disappeared, and in its stead a new etiquette came in, much more ceremonious and just as dull as the former one, but which complicated social life in the German capital and rendered it exceedingly disagreeable and unattractive for foreigners, in spite of the buoyancy of the Kaiser and his efforts to make his capital the greatest place on earth.

In those years from 1890 to 1910 William II was at the height of his fame and power, and had become in his way just as important a personage as Prince Bismarck had been in other days, with the exception that it was his speeches one dreaded, and not his actions. He had acquired the reputation of absolute tactlessness, and he could always be trusted to say and do the wrong thing; in this he was essentially a German.

His immense vanity prevented him from rendering himself an account of what he was doing or of the consequences of his acts, and he always blinded himself, just as he tried to blind others, as to the value of the various impulses he could not control. When he tried to be amiable, it was impossible not to like him, because he had inherited all the charm of his mother, together with the attractive manners of his father, but all the time when talking with him one had the impression that it would never do to trust him, because he might be tempted at any moment to throw a bomb at you or to let himself go in an explosion of wrath or enthusiasm it would be impossible to subdue. For many people he was and

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remained an enigma, until the Great War tore the veil under which his real nature had been hidden and revealed him with his insensate ambition, his heartlessness and lack of physical as well as of moral courage. The curious thing about him was that no one who knew him well felt surprised at the sudden collapse of all his mental faculties when the fortunes of war turned against him and when disaster overwhelmed him as well as his people. It was then discovered that no one had doubted but that he would fall at the first shock, and that this complete and abject end to his political career was viewed with feelings of relief rather than regret by his former subjects as well as by his so-called friends and family. If ever the proverb which says that no one is a prophet in his own country proved to be true, it was so in the case of William II, third and last Emperor, and by the grace of God, King of Prussia.

When we look back to-day on those bygone times before the War, this War the responsibility which the ex-Kaiser will never be able to escape, we wonder how we could possibly have worshipped at shrines which proved to have been erected to false divinities, a fact of which we were blissfully unaware at this distant period I am thinking about, while writing these lines. Yet we did worship at them, and we all of us among the upper ten thousand considered royalty as something quite wonderful, the vagaries of which were never to be questioned or the decrees challenged.

But, coming to social matters, the Kaiser had

Augusta Victoria

never been able to get on with his mother-in-law, the Duchess Adelaide, of whom I have already spoken. He made no secret of the fact that she jarred on his nerves and that the less he saw of her the better it would be for both of them. She, for her part, heartily reciprocated the ill-feeling.

This mutual antipathy was a source of great grief to the Kaiserin, because this gentle soul was equally devoted to her mother and to her husband, and to find that they could not agree was an immense trouble to her. She managed, however, to smooth matters by making her visits to the Duchess coincide with the numerous journeys of William II, so that he could not complain she was forsaking him for someone else. But once it happened that the Emperor returned unexpectedly, and found that his wife was not at home, but in Dresden with her mother, the latter having taken up her abode in this pretty little city. A telegram was dispatched post-haste to recall Augusta Victoria to her duties, and on her return she was made to understand that such attempts at emancipating herself from marital control would not be tolerated in the future. The Empress burst into tears and went on crying for three days at a stretch, when at last William II could bear it no longer, and in order to pacify his wife, whom by this time he regretted having tormented, he proceeded to buy her, just like any ordinary husband would have done, a new dress and several hats, a remedy which proved effective, because the only weakness of Augusta Victoria was her love for handsome clothes.

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This affection of the Empress for frocks and bonnets often led her into what the Kaiser called extravagance, but it was one of the few points in which she did not yield to him. She simply could not do without them, and she kept a staff of dress-makers employed in her exclusive service, with whom she spent hours discussing gowns and furbelows. But she had no taste, and, moreover, did not know how to put on her clothes, so that their magnificence passed unnoticed most of the time. She had a beautiful figure, and looked imposing and majestic when she appeared in public covered with splendid jewels, of which she had a wonderful collection, but she was dowdy and remained dowdy, in spite of the efforts of her daughter, Princess Victoria Louise, and of her daughter-in-law, the Crown Princess, who vainly tried to raise in the mind of the Empress notions of what the term "smart" really meant. The latter listened to them, but invariably remarked : "What you say, my dears, may be quite true, but I don't see why you consider a slit skirt nicer than the ordinary one, and you forget that an Empress cannot appear in anything that is *outré* or too fashionable."

One day, however, the Princess Louise, always fond of fun, induced one of her mother's maids to enter into a conspiracy and to disguise with a stitch or two an audacious slit which she had persuaded the Empress's dressmaker to inflict upon a skirt she was making.

Augusta Victoria put on the garment without

Princess Victoria Louise

noticing its peculiarity, and it was only towards the close of the evening that she suddenly perceived something was exceedingly wrong with her dress. She bent down, saw what it was, and gasped, because by that time the stitches had given way and she found herself attired in what was then the very height of fashion. There was nothing to do, however, but to appear unconcerned until her guests had all left, when she hurried to her room with the intention of giving her maids an unpleasant quarter of an hour. She was stopped on her way, however, by the Emperor, who had been advised by his daughter of what had happened. He congratulated his wife upon having at last bowed down before the decrees of Dame Fashion by thus adopting the new style of skirt.

Poor Augusta was nonplussed, and what added to her mortification was that at the next Court festivity nearly all the smart women of Berlin—and Berlin was a very smart place at that time—appeared also in slit skirts, which before had not been allowed, declaring that they felt so grateful to the Empress for having herself adopted the style and thereby left them free to follow her example.

Victoria Louise was the great pet of her parents, and especially of her father. She was the only one who could do with him whatever she liked, and, indeed, she ruled the Imperial household entirely, where no one could venture to contradict her. Even her mother did not dare to reprove her, and knew that if it came to an open fight between them the Kaiser would side with his daughter. Indeed, it was

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the latter who was entrusted with breaking to him any bad news which the Empress felt afraid to communicate to him, and she generally acquitted herself of the task to the satisfaction of everybody. She was a winsome little Princess, though mischievous at times, as, for instance, when she managed to frighten out of the New Palace in Potsdam one of its guests who had succeeded in making himself objectionable to all its inhabitants.

This guest was none other than His Serene Highness Prince George Victor of Waldeck and Pyrmont, the father of the present Dowager Queen Emma of the Netherlands and of the late Duchess of Albany, a most estimable prince, but one of the greatest bores who ever lived.

The Prince had taken quite an affection for the Kaiser, and, far more often than was desired, invited himself to the New Palace of Potsdam, where his arrival was always viewed with dread and dismay, and where his visits were wont to extend themselves to a length which they are not as a rule supposed to have in civilized society. No one, however, was brave enough to suggest to him that he should curtail them, though the Empress was often heard to complain that the burden of entertaining him generally fell entirely to her lot, as all the members of her family found pressing engagements compelling them to leave her alone with him. At last things came to such a pass that the Princess Louise made up her mind something ought to be done, and this was the means to which she resorted.

Prince Victor of Waldeck

One day, after dinner, she contrived to lead the conversation on the subject of ghosts. The Prince of Waldeck happened to be a believer in them, as all things which were beyond the scope of his intelligence he accepted upon trust, not caring to own he did not understand them. The Princess was aware of this peculiarity, and she managed to make an allusion to a ghost that was supposed to haunt the New Palace. The Prince immediately inquired about it, when she described it as an unpleasant ghost, given to ill-treat those to whom it appeared, but graciously added that it did not do so often, only in the case of someone about to die, when it would show itself to him or her in order to prepare them for their impending fate. Her remarks rankled in the mind of Prince von Waldeck, who felt decidedly uncomfortable as he went to bed that night. He had hardly fallen asleep when a slight noise in his room awakened him, when to his horror he saw standing in front of one of his windows a ghostly apparition covered with a white sheet, out of the folds of which glared flaming eyes that seemed to eat into his very soul.

He was so frightened he did not dare to move, and when at last he mustered sufficient courage to look again the spectre had vanished. It had consisted of a long stick covered up in a sheet, with a lantern at the top of it, which Princess Victoria and her brother, Prince Joachim, had held before the window of the room occupied by their parents' guest, which happened to be on the ground floor.

Those I Remember

The next day the Prince of Waldeck had received an urgent telegram calling him back home, and he left that same afternoon, to the surprise of the Kaiser and Kaiserin, who could hardly believe in their luck in getting rid of him so quickly; it was only much later that they learned of their daughter's trick. The Empress was, of course, indignant, but when pressed on the point had to admit that she felt very grateful to the Princess for having rid her of such a bore. And rid her she had, because, though the Prince lived a few years more after his nocturnal fright, he never again invited himself to the New Palace.

This Prince von Waldeck had had the luck to marry all his daughters extremely well, though none of them was pretty. But they had been very well brought up, and had cleverness, tact, and the talent to make themselves liked. The Queen of the Netherlands, who found herself in a most difficult position when, after the King's death, she had to act as Regent for her ten-year-old daughter, acquitted herself of her duties to the general satisfaction and brought up that only child in an admirable manner. The Duchess of Albany was beloved in England, and even the fact of her being a German Princess did not harm her popularity at the time of the Great War, whilst the Princess Marie of Würtemberg was literally worshipped in Stuttgart, where her death at the early age of five-and-twenty was looked upon as a national calamity.

Certainly none of these three Princesses had

Princesses of Waldeck

inherited the dullness which had made their father such an objectionable visitor, and they were as pleasant as they were intelligent and amiable. I will add that not one of them ever showed the narrow-mindedness which, especially at the time I am writing about, was one of the principal characteristics of German princesses in general.

CHAPTER XIV

VATICAN MEMORIES

TWO great forces have remained which have resisted the weight of the war—the Vatican and Buckingham Palace, the Pope of Rome and the King of England. When I evoke these pageants of old there are two which stand out in my mind like visions of fire which nothing can efface from it. One is Westminster Abbey, with the tiny, bent and yet so full of majestic dignity, figure of Queen Victoria, as she sits there listening to the religious service which celebrates the sixtieth year of her accession to the Throne. The organ plays, the sweet voices of the singers are heard chanting the *Te Deum* of thanksgiving, while a pleiad of princes and princesses is gathered around the old lady in whom all the glory of England is concentrated. Nothing is wanted to make this festival national, and not one false note comes to mar its solemnity. Outside an immense crowd is gathered, waiting to see and to cheer the Queen, their Queen, for whom hearts are so full of genuine affection and reverence; inside the ancient Abbey all the past history of England rises up, with its struggles and its slow progress towards a grandeur of which the Queen herself never doubted, and which she did her best to keep up. Indeed, it is a noble

Leo XIII

spectacle, one which could not have been seen anywhere else in the world. In the passionate fervour with which her subjects greeted Victoria there was an unspoken promise to stand by her successors in their hour of trial, a promise which has been nobly kept.

And then another vision comes before me, the vision of another, even vaster cathedral, that of St. Peter in Rome, and Pope Leo XIII carried through it in the *Sedia Gestatoria*, surrounded by his Court of Prelates, Bishops and Cardinals, dressed in his golden vestments, the huge tiara with its triple crown on his head, and his fingers raised in a gesture of benediction, while the white ostrich feathers of the gigantic fans carried behind him flutter softly in the breeze. A vision of Eastern magnificence, of almost oriental splendour, reminding one of the Middle Ages by its intense and almost violent colouring. This also has survived the war; and although the frail and ascetic figure of Pope Leo passed away from us many years since, in his place we find another old man, also in white attire, whom one can see sitting in his place on the throne of the Roman Pontiffs, and who, like him, raises his fingers in silent benediction over the crowd prostrated on the marble floor of the immense cathedral—the church of the world, as a Pope had called it—into which he is carried on great festivals, as his predecessors have been carried for more than a thousand years.

Pope Leo XIII is the only Roman Pontiff whom I saw quite closely and with whom I spoke. I was

Those I Remember

received, together with some friends, by him in the Vatican one morning early in May of the year 1894. Our cards of convocation said that we were invited to be present at the Pontiff's mass in his private chapel at eight o'clock in the morning. After mounting the many steps of the Scala Regia, we were taken by two Monsignori arrayed in violet garments into a large room without any furniture except stools placed in front of a closed door.

Suddenly, without warning, these doors were thrown open and the figure of the Pope stood on the threshold in his red cloak over his white garments, and he immediately gave the few people present his benediction. The whole thing was so unexpected, and the apparition of the Pontiff had something so startling about it, that it was impossible not to be impressed by the solemnity of the whole ceremony, which evidently had been calculated to produce this sensation of surprise and awe on the spectators of it. The voice of the Pope had an accent of indescribable yearning in it; it seemed, as he was praying, louder perhaps than is generally the case, that his supplications were addressed to the Almighty in favour of the whole of humanity, of the whole of the world. Yet it was impossible—at least for anyone not a Catholic—to dissociate oneself from the feeling that there was an absence of simplicity of ceremonial in most simple surroundings; but it made one realize the immense power and influence exercised by the Church of Rome over its adherents, the secret of a might which, so far, nothing has been

Cardinal Rampolla

able to destroy or even to shake, and which has survived all the various historical convulsions which have transformed the face of the world.

This impression of an artificial grandeur remained with me all through the audience which followed the divine service, and which took place in the Throne Room, where Leo XIII sat in state and where we were led in procession one after the other. And there again it was evident that every word spoken by the Pontiff had been carefully thought out beforehand, that the whole scene had been, so to say, rehearsed in his mind. This impression remained in spite of all the efforts to fight against it; but it did not take away any of the greatness of the spectacle. Yet somehow one could not help wondering what one would have thought had one been a Catholic instead of what the Roman Church calls a heretic. Still, the whole incident was of a nature to impress itself indelibly upon the mind.

Pope Leo XIII was a politician, and this could be guessed as soon as he spoke. Cardinal Rampolla, his famous Secretary of State, was also one, and a diplomat into the bargain. A Sicilian by birth, and the descendant of one of the oldest and noblest of Sicilian families, he represented a perfect type of the man of the world combined with an ecclesiastic, such as were met at the Court of the ancient French or Spanish kings. His appearance was an imposing one, and he could certainly be majestic on certain occasions. But at the same time he was a delightful companion, a most agreeable conversationalist, and

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he could even at times be sincere when he thought that this was the best policy for him to pursue. A keen observer of human nature, he had none of the narrowmindedness of so many Roman prelates, and it certainly was not his fault that a *modus vivendi* was not established between the Vatican and the Quirinal during his tenure of the Secretaryship of State. One may surmise that he did his best to bring it about, because he was an ardent Italian patriot, and he was clever enough to realize that the Papacy would, instead of losing anything, gain a great deal more moral influence over the world if it accepted accomplished facts, together with the hand which the dynasty of Savoy would have given much to be allowed to stretch towards the Vatican if it were only certain that it would not be repulsed.

Had Rampolla become Pope, he would have been a great Pontiff; but, alas! Austria stepped in when his election seemed assured, and he had to step aside. He did so with the grace and tact he had always brought to bear upon all the important events of his life; but to those who knew him well he made no secret of his intense disappointment and irritation against the people who had so cleverly succeeded in counteracting the move for which he had been preparing himself for years. Rampolla was far too intelligent a man not to realize that he had been careless and shown his hand too much, and he was perhaps more exasperated at his own imprudence than at the people who had known how to take advantage of it.

Rampolla's Ambition

Had Rampolla concealed his aim, which tended to the establishment of a close union between all the Latin races in Europe as a counterblast to the alliance of the Central Powers into which his beloved Italy had allowed itself to become entangled, and from which he wanted to save her; had he tried to hoodwink Austrian and Germany diplomacy, which for a man of his ability ought to have been an easy matter, it is likely he would have sat in the chair of St. Peter without anyone trying to block his way. As things turned out, the whole Conclave assembled after the death of Leo XIII had the surprise of seeing the Cardinal Archbishop of Cracow rise, and in the name of Francis Joseph, Emperor of Austria and Apostolic King of Hungary, declare that the Austrian Crown was making use of its right of veto at a Papal Election, and opposed the candidature of his Eminence the Cardinal Mariano Rampolla di Tindaro.

All the old prelates gathered at the Vatican remained absolutely astounded at this unexpected clap of thunder. Cardinal Rampolla alone kept his presence of mind, and expressed his relief not to be burdened with the heavy responsibilities which his elevation to the Papal dignity would have brought upon him. He never flinched under this blow of destiny, and even his enemies had to admit that no one could have borne better than he did this blighting of a lifetime's hopes. But when, after the Conclave was over, he left the Vatican for the Convent of St. Marta, which he had chosen for his

Those I Remember

residence, he never again re-entered its bronze gates or crossed its threshold.

Several years later, towards the close of his life, I visited him in this retreat, and found him very little changed, although perhaps less preoccupied to keep his real thoughts a secret from those with whom he was talking. The Secretary of State, burdened by the heavy problems connected with the government of the Church, had disappeared, and in his stead stood a perfect man of the world, interested in its affairs, but surveying them from afar, with the knowledge that never more would he be called upon to express officially an opinion in regard to their course. He declared himself delighted with the newly acquired freedom of action he was enjoying at last, and perfectly satisfied with himself and with others. But when I tried to speak of the reigning Pope, Pius X, he immediately changed the subject, remarking only, with that whimsical smile of his which said so much: "The Holy Father, he is a saint . . . a saint in our sinful world!"

"But your Eminence thinks that saints are perhaps not so much wanted now as they were before?" I ventured to ask.

The Cardinal smiled again.

"Well, I have never said so," he replied, "never said so . . ." and he stopped as if afraid of having allowed himself to go too far. Cardinal Rampolla was the type of those Italian prelates of olden days, when the princes of the Church were at the same time its defenders, and carried the sword

Pius X

just as easily as they carry their rosary nowadays. In the times of the Borgias and of the Medicis he would have been at his place, but in the Rome of the twentieth century he was an anachronism, and perhaps it was just as well that he was not given the opportunity to exercise his diplomatic talents from the height of the Sedia Gestatoria, in which he had hoped he would be carried on the shoulders of the Swiss Guards, through the halls of the Vatican into the vastness of St. Peter, in order to give to the crowds assembled in the famous square the solemn benediction *Urbi et Orbi*, the first gift of a newly elected Pontiff to the Catholic world when he has been chosen to stand at its head.

I think that no one I have ever met was more keenly alive than Cardinal Rampolla to the artificiality of the exterior pomp of the Vatican. Indeed, he was credited with the intention, in case he were chosen as the successor of Leo XIII, to do away with a great deal of this unnecessary grandeur so contrary to the spirit and teachings of Christ the Saviour. Although gifted with all the imagination of Italians in general and Sicilians in particular, he yet understood that a great deal of this brilliant show had had its day and was no longer appropriate in an age tending more and more to become thoroughly democratic. He could read the future in the history of the past, and clearly foresaw, if others did not, that the time was drawing near when kingdoms and empires would disappear, kings and emperors would be overturned, and thrones with few exceptions

Those I Remember

would crumble down into the dust. He had no illusions left, and it was impossible to talk with him and not to be struck by the calm and impartial glance with which he surveyed men and events and the pity which it revealed, pity for a past about to be forgotten, for a present full of coming terrors, and for a future into the depths of which none could even attempt to read.

Queen Victoria, Pope Leo XIII, Cardinal Rampolla, they all belong to an era which seems far from us. If they could come back to life it is probable that they would not recognize the world in which they had played such a prominent part, so changed it is. The luxury and pomp which surrounded them, the courtiers who gathered near them and prostrated themselves at their feet, the shows in which they took a part—all this has passed away, never to be seen again.

CHAPTER XV

MEMORIES OF ROYAL MARRIAGES

AT the foot of the altar, in the little white marble chapel of the old Schloss in Berlin, a young pair is standing and pledging each to each in tenderness and love for one another. She is fair and slight, taller than her bridegroom, but timid, bashful and embarrassed at finding herself the cynosure of all eyes. He is a future Emperor, and fate has many things in reserve for him, although we knew it not when we watched him put the ring on the finger of his bride. He was to set the match to a conflagration from which nothing but ruins and skeletons were to result. He was to destroy all the grandeur with which that day he stood surrounded; she was to die in exile of a broken heart.

But as we who are present look upon the brilliant scene we know nothing of all this, we suspect nothing, we foresee nothing—the book of fate mercifully closed before us!

What next again? Another wedding, another bride, divinely tall and divinely fair, with a huge crown of diamonds surmounting her proud head, the train of her long mantle of gold brocade lined with ermine carried by chamberlains in gorgeously embroidered coats. Her bridegroom, in red uniform, leads her slowly through endless rooms crowded with

Those I Remember

ladies in brilliant attire, blazing with diamonds and pearls, and men in gala garments with stars and decorations, and cocked hats bearing white ostrich feathers.

They are also marching toward what one hopes will mean happiness for them and for others, but which is in reality the first step toward a high and steep Calvary, where they will find martyrdom and death in a dark basement room far, far away, in a Siberian town where women and children will be murdered in cold blood!

Who on that day could have thought of such disasters, such horrors? All was beautiful, all was peaceful, all was calm. We were all gay, we were all merry, we were all laughing, we were all thinking of love, and of beauty, and of pretty clothes, and of soft words murmured in lovely women's ears!

Talking and thinking thus about the past has led me far and from what I had intended saying. I wanted to bring back before my readers some of the quaint customs among Royalty in the way its nuptials were celebrated in the different European countries where fixed rules determined these festivities without anything being left to the goodwill and pleasure of the interested parties. Here again we see that it was in England only that common sense presided at the marriages of princes and princesses of the Blood Royal. It is absolutely certain that the quiet simplicity, in spite of the Royal pomp which accompanied them, with which King George and Queen

Wedding of Princess Mary

Mary saw fit to celebrate the marriages of their children, is among the things that have contributed to a large extent to the ever-increasing popularity of what is now the House of Windsor. They have always associated their subjects with their family joys.

In England formerly Royal weddings were celebrated in one or other of the private chapels, of which there is one in each palace, and they thus partook of the character of a private ceremony from which the crowds were excluded with intention. The choice of Westminster Abbey for the wedding, first of the Princess Mary, then of the Duke of York, was entirely the idea of the King and Queen, and it proves that they want their people to share their family festivals.

In olden days things were different and far less democratic, especially on the Continent, where it was indeed a very important event whenever a member of one of the three great reigning houses, the Hapsburgs, Hohenzollerns, or Romanoffs, took a husband or a wife.

In Austria the marriages of the archdukes and archduchesses were solemnized according to the requirements of the strictest of Spanish etiquette. When nuptials were celebrated in Vienna they invariably took place in the Church of the Augustine Friars, which was connected with the Hofburg and considered as the parish of the Austrian Sovereigns. At its altar, on their bridal morning, had knelt Marie Theresa; the unfortunate Marie Antoinette; Marie Louise, when she plighted her troth to Napoleon,

Those I Remember

represented by Marshal Berthier, Prince of Wagram ; the late Emperor Francis Joseph with his beautiful Empress, Elizabeth of Bavaria ; and the unfortunate Archduke Rudolph, whose mangled remains were to lie there in state a few years later, almost on the same spot where he had wedded the Princess Stephanie of Belgium.

The Augustine Church is one of the saddest spots on earth ; it reminds one sometimes of St. Peter-ad-Vincula, by the Tower of London, for it has seen almost as many tragedies, though no beheaded body is laid to rest in its vaults. It is by no means a handsome edifice and strikes the visitor as an unusually cold place, the altar being so simple and bare that it could easily be mistaken for a Protestant one ; even when flowers and rare tapestries decorate it on State occasions it is not a cheerful place by any means. But its walls are so closely connected with the history of the Hapsburgs that they possess an interest no other building in Vienna, with the exception of the old Cathedral of St. Stephen, inspires. The whole tragedy of the Austrian Empire is epitomized in this church.

Sometimes the late Emperor Francis Joseph had his numerous nephews and nieces married in the private chapel of the Castle of Schönbrunn ; this happened more than once in the last years of his reign, when he hardly ever lived in the Hofburg, but spent most of the year in that summer residence of his ancestors. But whether in Schönbrunn or in Vienna, Imperial weddings had to follow strictly the

Austrian Customs

rules established for them in the days when Charles the Fifth was Emperor and Austria at the height of its prestige and power.

One of these customs was the formal announcement of the betrothal of a member of the Imperial family by the Sovereign himself, before the parents of the engaged couple were allowed to inform their friends of the great event. Then the Minister of the Imperial Household was called upon to draw the marriage settlements according to old custom. Every archduchess was dowered by the Emperor apart from the fortune which she received from her own parents, and her trousseau was also bought at the Monarch's expense. This trousseau was exhibited publicly in one of the state apartments of the Hofburg, where the Austrian aristocrats were allowed to view it on the presentation of special invitation cards. There was always a fixed number of dresses and linen, of which every bride received a large quantity, generally six dozen of underwear, and table and house linen in a corresponding quantity. There were also certain jewels which were always given to her: a pearl necklace, a diamond tiara and diamond necklace and ear-rings, for which the Emperor paid; and finally, on her wedding day she was handed the sum of fifty thousand florins as pocket-money for her first expenses, which were contained in a gold bag.

Three days before the marriage each archduchess had to make a solemn renunciation of her eventual rights to the succession to the Austrian throne. It

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is not generally known that this throne could be inherited in the female line, and for this reason it was requested of every princess belonging to the Hapsburg family to give up any idea of its falling to her or to her descendants, by calling upon Heaven to witness that she had no intention of ever claiming it.

The ceremony generally took place in the Throne Room of the Hofburg, in the middle of which was erected an altar with a book of the Gospels and a crucifix upon it. The Archbishop of Vienna presided over the ceremony, which began by the Emperor taking his place in front of the throne, with the members of the Imperial family grouped around him, the ladies on his right and the men on his left. Then a chamberlain went to fetch the bride, who made her entry into the room quite alone, dressed in a pink evening gown, with a long train held up by two pages, and followed at a respectful distance by the ladies of her household. She made a profound curtsy to the Sovereign, who then took her by the hand and led her to the altar, before which she knelt. The Archbishop read the formula of renunciation, which the archduchess repeated after him, and she was handed a pen to sign it and given the crucifix and Gospel to kiss. The Emperor then led her back towards the throne, when she had to turn round and face him as he took his place before it, and make him a second and even deeper curtsy than the first one. The Minister of the Imperial Household then read the marriage settlements, after which

Wedding in the Hofburg

the ceremony came to an end and the future bride was led back in a solemn procession to her own apartments.

The next three days she had to spend in absolute solitude and retreat, not being even allowed to see her betrothed. She had to be entirely absorbed in the performance of her religious duties, such as a general confession of her past sins and the taking of holy communion, in which she was joined by her fiancé. But so strict was the etiquette that, though they knelt beside each other on that occasion, they were not permitted to exchange a single word.

On the wedding morning the bride was dressed in great state by the Mistress of the Robes of the Imperial Court in presence of the Empress and of all the archduchesses. She had to wear a diamond tiara, but not a crown, and orange flowers in her hair, with a long lace veil, half of which hung over her face. Her dress was of silver cloth richly embroidered also in silver, and a court train, with diamonds only as ornaments, together with the ribbons of her various orders and decorations. When she was ready, the Mistress of the Robes, accompanied by two pages, went to inform the Emperor of it, and the Sovereign left his private apartments to fetch the bride. A procession was formed which passed through all the corridors and state apartments of the Hofburg towards the Augustine Church, where the clergy were awaiting it.

The Archbishop of Vienna performed the ceremony, and both bride and bridegroom, before saying

Those I Remember

“Yes,” turned towards the Sovereign and bowed profoundly to him, to which salutation he replied by saying quite loudly : “*Ich erlaube es*” (I allow it).

When the marriage was concluded, a solemn mass was celebrated, after which the young couple received congratulations and left the church. There was no reception afterwards; only a family breakfast, at which the Emperor proposed the health of the newly-married pair, who left immediately on their wedding trip, which generally consisted of a sojourn of a few days in one of the Imperial residences in the neighbourhood of Vienna. After a week of this retreat they came back to the capital to pay a solemn visit of thanks to the Emperor and Empress, and they were free to do whatever they liked.

With the archduchesses who married into foreign families, and had to leave Austria after their wedding, things were a little different, in so far as the visit of thanks took place immediately after the bridal ceremony, and the princess was accompanied to the railway station by the whole of the Imperial family and a military escort. But otherwise all went according to the same old ceremonial, which dated from the days of Maria Theresa, and had never been changed or altered.

I will here mention a curious thing which I believe is not known to the general public. After the murder of the Empress Elizabeth, Francis Joseph for a moment thought of taking to himself another wife, and this in spite of the influence exercised over him by Katherine Schratt, the famous actress, who for

The Queen of Spain's Refusal

something like fifty years was everything in his life. His choice fell on the widowed Queen of Spain, the mother of the present King, herself an Austrian archduchess, whom he believed would feel extremely honoured by his offer. But then the question arose—and it proved an important one—could the Queen, after her formal renunciation of her rights to the Throne of Austria, be eligible to occupy it, even when it was offered to her by its occupant? Strange as it may appear to us, this question caused a consultation of the greatest legal authorities in Vienna, who, however were spared the embarrassment of coming to a decision because Queen Marie Christina, when sounded privately as to the matter, declared that under no circumstances whatever would she consent to marry again, and furthermore, the prospect of becoming the consort of Francis Joseph did not tempt her in the very least.

In the Prussian Royal House the marriages of their members were also celebrated after an old etiquette the exigencies of which were never modified so long as the Hohenzollerns remained upon their throne. In Berlin, as in Vienna, the wedding announcements were made by the Sovereign, who caused them to be inserted in the *Official Gazette* with an indication that he had been pleased to signify his consent to the contemplated union. After that an elaborate dinner was given in the old Castle of Berlin, at which the health of the prospective bride and bridegroom was ceremoniously honoured, and a few days later the engaged pair received the congratulations of

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the Court and society, the form of which was that those concerned passed before a dais upon which the affianced pair stood surrounded by the members of their household, each in passing making a profound curtsy. This was a very trying affair; indeed, when the late Duchess of Connaught had to undergo its tension she owned, when it was over, that she had never spent a more unpleasant hour in her whole life. With her it was further aggravated by the fact that the ceremony was a formal good-bye to her native land, as her marriage did not take place in Germany, but in England, Queen Victoria having insisted on its being solemnized in St. George's Chapel, Windsor.

A few days after this curious kind of reception, the marriage itself took place. It was always celebrated in the evening at six o'clock, in the private chapel of the old Schloss, to reach which one had to go through the whole of the state apartments and the famous White Hall, where Court balls were held. The bride and bridegroom walked together at the head of the procession, then came the Emperor and Empress, followed by the princes and princesses. The Empress had previously put on the head of the bride the diamond crown which every Prussian princess was expected to wear for this occasion, and which was composed of the rarest and most beautiful stones imaginable. It was a part of the Crown treasury, and was only worn at a wedding. Myrtle blossoms and orange flowers formed a wreath which was placed under it, and a long lace veil trailed

A Hohenzollern Wedding

behind it and covered the entire bridal dress. The latter was always made out of silver cloth, with an immense train, trimmed with wonderful old lace—also an Hohenzollern heirloom—which was held by four ladies, generally friends of the bride, who, apart from her crown, wore also on her neck and on the bodice of her gown precious stones belonging to the Sovereign.

When the procession reached the chapel it was met by the Protestant clergy of Berlin Cathedral, as well as by the private chaplain to the Royal family, who used the occasion in order to make a long sermon, which was generally listened to with great impatience. There were no chairs in the chapel, and ladies often objected to the necessity of having to stand for more than an hour at a stretch, with the heavy court train on the left arm; but the Empress Augusta would not hear of any curtailment of the old-established etiquette. Once she noticed an old and extremely important duchess seated behind the flounces of other ladies on a camp stool, with which she had provided herself. Augusta at once sent one of her chamberlains to tell the unfortunate lady that if she did not feel equal to standing she ought to go home instead of setting a bad example to the younger generation. One may imagine the dismay produced by this ungracious message.

The sermon over, the clergyman proceeded to perform the marriage ceremony according to the Lutheran rite, which was an exceedingly short one.

Those I Remember

The rings were exchanged, and at the moment this was done a battery of artillery, stationed in the Lustgarten opposite the castle, fired a Royal salute of one hundred and one guns.

When the marriage was completed, the procession re-formed and proceeded to the White Hall, where a throne had been prepared for the Emperor and Empress, who stood in front of it with the newly married pair between them, and once more all the guests filed past them in silence.

A magnificent supper was then served at which the health of the bride and bridegroom was proposed by the Emperor, and then came the culminating point of the brilliant ceremony, and the famous *Fackel Tanz*, or torch dance, was started. The bride went round the White Hall hand in hand with the Emperor first, and then with every prince of the Royal family or guest at the wedding, whilst the bridegroom performed the same ceremony with the Empress, and afterwards with every other Royal lady present. They were preceded by pages and all the members of the Prussian Ministry carrying large wax lighted torches in their hands. The whole performance was exceedingly quaint and curious, but the unfortunate Ministers obliged to figure in it hated it with all their hearts and would have given a great deal to see the old custom abolished. Sometimes even they revolted and pleaded sickness to escape the ordeal. Prince Bismarck, when asked one day whether he would also be seen, with his lighted torch in his hand, walking round and round the Royal

Princess Elizabeth of Prussia

ballroom, replied that "he had not been in the habit of making a fool of himself, and that certainly he was not going to begin."

The *Fackel Tanz* over, another ancient custom was observed, which consisted of the Mistress of the Robes of the newly married princess distributing to the guests short strips of blue moiré ribbon, which were supposed to be part of the bride's garters. No one knew what was the origin of this curious procedure, but it was always strictly adhered to.

A newly married couple were not supposed to go on a honeymoon trip, but had to occupy for one week an apartment in the Royal castle, which was known by the name of the Bridal Apartment and which was used only on such occasions. The pair were taken to it with great ceremony, and the next morning they were expected to attend a solemn service of thanksgiving in the same chapel where they had been married, a service at which the whole of Court society was invited, and at which the bride was supposed to appear in a pink silk dress with a hat of the same colour, and a spray of orange blossoms without flowers fastened on the bodice of her gown. The same night a big ball was given in the White Hall of the Schloss, and the day following a gala performance at the opera, only after which the couple were allowed to depart for green fields and pastures new.

When the Princess Elizabeth of Prussia was married to the Hereditary Duke of Oldenburg she exclaimed that she felt sure all these ceremonies had

Those I Remember

been invented to cure a bride of wanting to marry a second time should she ever become a widow. But in spite of the criticism she had to submit to this wedding etiquette, as had all other Prussian princesses, who, however, had one compensation for the annoyances they had to undergo before they were allowed to leave their father's house, and that was the beautiful wedding gifts which they received. The Hohenzollerns, as the Hapsburgs, gave splendid trousseaux to their princesses, and loaded them with rare jewels, also bought according to the requirements of an old etiquette. Each of them received a big diadem of diamonds, a necklace composed of six rows of pearls, a diamond rivi re, two pairs of earrings, one of pearls and the other of diamonds, and an immense corsage ornament of brilliants. This was given to them by the State, and apart from it they were presented with other jewels of great value by their own family.

It was, however, in Russia that Imperial weddings were really gorgeous affairs. The ceremonies began by a solemn entry of the bride into St. Petersburg in a golden carriage lined inside with crimson velvet, the doors studded with real diamonds. This carriage, which was drawn by eight milk-white horses, only saw the light of day for occasions of this kind and for the coronation of a Sovereign. The seat was raised high enough for the crowds to be able to see the persons sitting inside, and the future bride sat at the right of the Empress, whose duty it was to accompany her on this State entry

Russian Royal Weddings

in the Russian capital and to present her to its population. The Emperor and grand dukes, on horseback, surrounded this ancient equipage, which was followed by others almost as magnificent, in which rode the ladies of the Imperial family and their attendants. The procession, before entering the Winter Palace, stopped at the Cathedral of Kazan, where the future bride was greeted by the Metropolitan and the whole clergy of St. Petersburg, who ceremoniously conducted her to the miraculous image of Our Lady of Kazan, before which she knelt and prayed for a few minutes.

The next day the marriage itself took place in the private chapel of the Winter Palace. That chapel was far too small to be able to contain the immense crowds assembled in the Imperial residence on such occasions, and struggles without end used to take place between people who wanted to squeeze themselves in to see something of the ceremony and those who refused to budge in order to make room for them.

On the same evening a State Banquet took place, and on the day following a Court Ball, and sometimes, though not often, a State Performance was given at the opera, to which invitations were issued by the Master of the Imperial Household in the name of the Sovereigns. Of course the presents offered to the bride were absolutely magnificent, and her trousseau also was wonderful, etiquette prescribing that she should receive twelve dozen of every kind of underwear, which was always made out of

Those I Remember

the thinnest and flimsiest of French baptistes and trimmed with real Valenciennes or Honiton lace. Of dresses she had thirty-six, and there were also priceless sets of furs and at least six fur coats of different kinds. When Queen Olga of Greece was married, and her trousseau arrived in Athens, the Greeks would never believe that all these trunks contained frocks and hats, flounces and furbelows, and they kept saying that the Emperor of Russia had sent in this way ammunitions and guns, of which at that time the Greek army was in urgent need.

The last Imperial wedding celebrated in St. Petersburg was that of the unfortunate Tsar Nicholas II. It was one of the saddest marriages I ever remember having witnessed. The Court was in deep mourning for the Tsar Alexander III, who had died six weeks before, and there had been a question of postponing until the following year the marriage of his successor. But Queen Victoria had interfered and persuaded the Dowager Empress Marie to have the nuptials of her son performed as quickly as possible so as to ensure the direct line of succession to the throne.

This haste had not been accepted by the nation with anything like pleasure, and was considered by it as a proof of disrespect to the memory of the Sovereign who had just passed away and who had been so very much beloved by all his subjects. When the future Empress was seen driving in the streets of St. Petersburg people were heard to murmur: "She came to us behind a coffin; she will bring nothing

Wedding of Nicholas II

but misfortune with her.” A strange premonition of all the horrors the future contained for the radiant bride.

With a diadem on her head and a long Imperial mantle of gold brocade lined with ermine pending from her shoulders, she passed through the immense halls and corridors of the Winter Palace, hand in hand with her future husband, on her way to the chapel in all the splendour of her wondrous beauty. She was really beautiful on that day. It was the hour of her supreme triumph, the one on which she reached the summit of all the joys that had been destined for her by Providence. Alas that it should be the prelude to long and weary years ending in tragedy!

It was related afterwards that while she was dressing before the table on which was spread, according to custom, the golden toilet service of the Empress Anna Ivanovna, she suddenly grew pale and almost collapsed in the arms of her attendants. To all the questions which were asked of her she refused to answer; but superstitious people declared that she had seen in the mirror before which she was being arrayed, pass like a flash of lightning, fierce and cruel faces of men about to lay their hands upon her and drag her away. Whether this was true or not is, of course, difficult to say; but a lot of gossip went about on the subject in St. Petersburg, gossip which was connected with the ever-increasing unpopularity of the young consort of Nicholas II. Her reign began with tears, and we know now with what tears and in how much blood it came to an end.

Those I Remember

The fact of the matter is that a superstitious person, impressed by all the bad omens which attended this marriage of the last Tsar of Russia with the Princess Alix of Hesse, must have talked too much.

One other scene I witnessed. A spectacle of beauty, which I remember well, was the silver wedding of the Emperor and Empress Frederick. It was the occasion of the most gorgeous and brilliant festivity ever given in the old Castle of the Prussian Kings, in Berlin, the reproduction of the Court of Queen Elizabeth, with Raleigh and Essex and Burleigh gathered about her, and the shade of Mary Stuart hovering in the distance. The Virgin Queen herself was represented by one of the loveliest women of the Court, the Countess Elsa Stolberg Wernigerode, whose blonde beauty harmonized so well with the magnificent costume she wore. It was indeed a sight among sights which brought back this brilliant epoch of the sixteenth century with all its tales of beauty, of murder, of rivalries, of two political systems and two religious creeds fighting one another, and yet unable to resist the fascination of the soft eyes of Marguerite de Valois, the peerless princess for whom La Mole died and Bussy—the brave Bussy—nearly perished, and whose charms enslaved all the men of the Court of Catherine de' Medici with the sole exception of the valiant Henri de Navarre, to whom she was married on the eve of the bloody night of St. Bartholomew.

And while the long procession of knights and

A Silver Wedding

ladies, and queens and princes, slowly passed before the throne, on the steps of which stood Victoria, Crown Princess of Germany, and her husband, the valiant and popular Crown Prince Frederick, there was no one among those who took part in it, or simply watched it from aside, who did not believe that the heroes of the day, the popular pair whose twenty-five years of an ideally happy union was being celebrated amid such pomp, had a long and brilliant future before them, a future which they would understand how to use for the good of others, of their people and of the world.

But, again . . . alas!

CHAPTER XVI

CROWNS AND DIADEMS

IT is probable that if people had been able to guess that they were never to see again a Russian monarch buried they would have noticed more carefully than they did the many ceremonies which accompanied the obsequies of Alexander III, ceremonies each reposing upon some quaint tradition, as, for instance, the presence of two knights, one in black and the other in white armour, riding in front of the hearse, which were supposed to represent the two powers for good and for evil which figure in every human life.

Then there was the endless procession of the different crowns which the Tsar had the right to wear, carried by a high functionary of the Court, beginning with the huge diamond diadem which Alexander had placed on his head in Moscow, on that memorable day of his coronation; next the Polish crown, and that of Kazan and of Astrakhan and of Georgia, and of many other lands, ending with the famous cap of Monomache, the most ancient of Russian emblems of Supreme Power.

With these crowns of olden times the sceptre and all the other regalia was carried in state through the streets of St. Petersburg amidst a silent and subdued crowd, who looked upon the hearse, with its huge

Russian Ceremonies

coffin in which lay all that was left of the mighty Tsar who, in the short space of thirteen years, had won for himself such a warm place in the hearts of his subjects, and who had loved Russia so well. At that moment the prestige of the Empire of Peter the Great stood higher than it had ever stood before. Russia was considered the foremost Power in Europe, her alliance was sought, her movements watched with intense interest, all her actions commented upon and her military might supposed to equal that of Germany. Hardly more than a score of years later nothing was left of all this, and in the weak hands of Nicholas II the whole gigantic work of the Romanoff dynasty was wrecked—and wrecked for ever. The fact that he paid for his mistakes with his life and those of his family does not lessen his responsibility before history.

The death of Alexander closed an epoch, just as much as the great war, with all its aftermath, rang the knell of the old pomp which until then had surrounded Royalty and all its movements, when coronations as well as funerals of Sovereigns constituted something almost akin to national events.

On account of this circumstance it will be interesting to describe and recall the old and quaint rites by which monarchs were solemnly entrusted with the functions of their high estate and office before their remembrance falls into oblivion.

In Russia the coronation of the Tsars was almost a sacred event, because in the superstitious mind of the people the monarch was not considered as being

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in full exercise of his power until it had been confirmed by the handing over to him of his crown and sceptre by the oldest of the three Russian Metropolitans in the ancient shrine of the Assumption in Moscow.

This cathedral, enclosed within the walls of the Kremlin, was the only one in which the ceremony could be performed, and one of the reasons why it had been chosen for that purpose by the Tsar Ivan III was on account of the fact that no one had ever been buried in it. Not only was it a church in which only joyous ceremonies could take place, but it was the one church in the ancient capital of Russia which was considered as forming part of the private property of the Sovereign, the one to which he repaired whenever he arrived in Moscow, the one from which every Imperial Manifesto was read solemnly to the nation before this reading could take place anywhere else in Russia.

In ancient times the consorts of Tsars did not participate in the ceremony of the coronation. The Russian Tsaritsas used to spend their time confined within the walls of the Terem, where their days were supposed to be filled with different religious exercises and the artistic needlework at which Russian noblewomen were great experts. A Tsaritsa was allowed, nevertheless, to witness her husband's coronation from a loggia, built up in the cathedral, which now forms part of a gallery encircling it, and was also permitted to join him in the solemn meal which followed upon the festival and formed a part of it—

Peter the Great

a meal which the great Boyars alone were permitted to attend, and at which the Tsar drank, for the only time in his life, the health of his subjects.

Peter the Great, who tried all through his reign to do away with the customs of his ancestors, was the first one who crowned his consort, the Empress Catherine, that Livonian servant girl whom he had married after having repudiated and sent to a cloister his first wife, the unfortunate and beautiful Eudoxia Lapoukhyn, the mother of the still more unfortunate Tsarevitch Alexis.

This decision to put the diadem of the Romanoffs on the brow of the woman who had been such a help to him in many a dark day was, of course, violently opposed by the old Muscovite nobility, who objected to this raising to the Imperial Throne of one whose birth had not entitled her to the privilege. But Peter was not a man who could be disobeyed, so Catherine knelt down before him in the Cathedral of the Assumption, and was raised by him with the Empress's coronet on her head, no one among all those who witnessed the ceremony daring to say one word against its performance.

This crown of Catherine was made for her in Amsterdam, and was the one used at the coronation of all the Empresses who followed her upon the throne of Russia.

When Catherine became a Sovereign in her own right after Peter's death, it was decided by Menschikoff, who had remained her principal adviser, that she ought to submit to a second coronation ceremony,

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which was duly performed in the Cathedral of the Assumption. It was there also that her successor, Peter II, was crowned, as in their turn were the Empresses Anna Ivanovna, and Elizabeth Petrovna, the daughter of the Great Reformer. Thus gradually the Russian people became accustomed to the sight, which at first had shocked them so much, of a woman receiving and wearing the old crown of the Romanoffs.

Peter III, Elizabeth's successor, was never crowned, his reign having lasted only a few months. After him his wife Catherine II, the Great Catherine as she is still called, became an Empress in her own right, and it was on the occasion of her anointing that the old ceremonial connected with the solemn assumption of the Imperial dignity by the Russian Tsars was modified and arranged according to modern ideas. It was on that occasion, too, that the crown of the Sovereign was reset in Geneva and also changed from that of the Muscovite potentates into an imitation of the crown of the Holy Roman Empire. Since that day this crown has never been reset, and when Nicholas II put it on his head he could remember that its weight had not sat so heavily on the brow of his famous ancestress as it did on his own.

The old diadem which Catherine I had received from the hands of Peter the Great was used at the coronation of the last six Russian Empresses : Marie, the wife of Paul I ; Elizabeth, the consort of Alexander I ; Alexandra, the consort of Nicholas I ; Marie Alexandrovna, the mother of Alexander III ; the

The Coronation Coaches

Dowager Empress Marie ; and, last, the unfortunate Alexandra Feodorovna, whose cruel murder, together with her husband and children, was one of the great tragedies of the Russian Revolution.

But to come back to the ceremony of the coronation itself. For the Sovereign it was the most important moment in his life, and he used to prepare himself for it by a whole week of prayer and fasting in a little summer palace on the outskirts of Moscow called the Petrovsky Palace. It was from there that he made his solemn entry into Moscow, and this entry was one of the most important moments of the coronation. It was on this occasion that the ancient gilded coaches which formed a part of the Imperial Treasury were seen by the public. They were curious and magnificent vehicles. The one in which rode the Empress was surmounted by an Imperial crown—which was detachable—set with diamonds which flashed in the rays of the sun, making a truly beautiful picture. It was a carriage that had been made in Paris for Elizabeth Petrovna, but which she had never used, having died before it was completed. Its doors were all painted in Vernis Martin by Boucher. The handles were ornamented with diamonds and precious stones. The Empress Mother was the one who, on this solemn occasion of her son's coronation, rode in it alone, the reigning Empress having no right to use it before she herself had been crowned ; but she appeared in another gorgeous vehicle, hardly inferior to that in which sat her mother-in-law, which was also resplendent with gold

Those I Remember

and precious stones. Both these carriages were driven by eight snow-white horses in splendid harness, and pages in gala dress sat behind, while an escort of Guards surrounded them. Preceding them, on horseback, rode the Emperor a little in advance of the princes of his family, the foreign delegates, and a brilliant retinue of officers on beautiful chargers, the whole composing a truly imposing spectacle. Behind the two Empresses was a long string of carriages containing the foreign princesses and Russian grand duchesses with their ladies-in-waiting and attendants. Altogether there were about fifty vehicles.

Before entering the Kremlin the procession paused before the old chapel of Our Lady of Iversky, the most venerated shrine in Moscow, and there the Emperor alighted from his horse and the Empress left her gorgeous coach, and both entered the small chapel to spend a few moments in silent prayer. On the occasion of the coronation of Alexander III, his consort, the lovely and good Empress Marie, the sister of the equally lovely and good Queen Alexandra of England, won the hearts of her subjects by one gesture which was always remembered afterwards. When she went out of the chapel she faced the immense crowd gathered around it, and though this was not included in the ceremonial, she swept a long curtsy before it, saluting in it all her husband's subjects with a sweeping movement which will never be forgotten by those who witnessed it. Thirteen years later her daughter-in-law, Alexandra—or Alix

Coronation of Nicholas II

as we knew her—stood in the same place, but she never thought of calling upon the crowds to share with her her emotions or her joy. Proudly and haughtily she left the old shrine whose Virgin later on failed to protect her or her family from the evil which fell upon them.

The coronation took place three days after this solemn entry of the Tsar into his ancient capital. It began at seven o'clock in the morning, when the gates of the Kremlin were thrown open to the mass of the invited guests. The old palace was soon filled with ladies in Russian court dress, bright with embroideries and gold lace, and covered with rare jewels. At eight o'clock a procession of priests left the Cathedral of the Assumption and proceeded to bless the way from the Kremlin to the church, through the inside court in which stood the five holiest churches of Holy Moscow, this court, for the occasion, being covered entirely with scarlet cloth. After that, generals in waiting on the Sovereign carried a big canopy of gold brocade surmounted with tufts of ostrich plumes, and stationed themselves with it at the foot of what was called the Red Staircase. At the coronation of Nicholas II there were two of these canopies, one for him and for his consort, and the other for his mother. The latter was the first to appear after the foreign princes and princesses and the Russian Imperial family had gone inside the cathedral. She was arrayed in the Imperial regalia with the crown upon her head, and the long mantle of cloth of gold, lined with ermine and embroidered

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with the black Russian eagles, trailing from her shoulders. She went slowly down the historic staircase, her neck and arms sparkling with diamonds, and the chain of the Order of St. Andrew round her throat, and was greeted at the portal of the church by the Metropolitan of Moscow, bending her graceful little head under his blessing, after which she disappeared within the grey walls that had already witnessed so many similar ceremonies.

A few moments' pause, and then hurrahs and acclamations without number announced to the assembled crowds that the Sovereign had left his private apartments. A few moments more and he was seen descending, in his turn, the famous staircase at the foot of which the heads of the rebellious Strelitz had fallen by the hand of the great Peter. He was leading the Empress by the hand and was in full general's uniform, whilst she was dressed in white, so simply that she could almost have been taken for a bride, had it not been that her head was quite bare of ornaments and her hair was falling in long curls over her shoulders. They took their places under the golden canopy, and proceeded in their turn towards the Cathedral, at the gates of which the entire clergy of the Cathedral Churches, headed by the three Russian Metropolitans, awaited them.

A pause, and then the Monarch and his Consort take their places on a throne opposite the one on which the Dowager Empress awaits them, and bows to them profoundly when they appear. Then the ceremony begins.

The Cathedral Ceremony

At first a prayer is read, then the Tsar is approached by the Metropolitan, who brings him the Imperial diadem on a cushion of gold brocade. He takes it up and puts it on his head, while the choir bursts forth in a thanksgiving hymn. Then, standing all alone, with the sceptre and globe in his right and left hand, he solemnly recites the Nicene Creed, while the whole assembly drops on their knees to listen to him. After that the Empress, leaving her place, approaches her Consort. She first curtsies to him deeply, and then kneels down at his feet. He takes off his Crown and lightly touches her head with it, then sets on her brow the smaller diadem of the Russian Empresses, after which she is arrayed in the Imperial mantle, the chain of the Order of St. Andrew is put around her neck, and the ceremony is over.

A solemn service of thanksgiving follows, during which the Sovereigns receive the Holy Communion, and then the most striking part of the festival takes place. Arrayed in their regalia, the Sovereigns leave the Cathedral of the Assumption, at the sound of the bells of the 360 churches of Moscow, headed by the loud voice of the belfry of Ivan Weliki, and proceed on a tour of all the holy shrines contained in the interior of the Kremlin. It is a splendid and unique sight indeed to see them walking slowly, crown on the head and gold brocade mantle on the shoulders, the Emperor with the sceptre in his right hand, and the Empress with her fingers closed together in silent prayer, amidst the frantic hurrahs of thousands of

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spectators, all wishing them long life and a happy reign.

The 27th of May, 1896, was the last time that Moscow gazed upon a spectacle of that kind, the last time that a Tsar was crowned in the old capital of the Romanoffs. And on that day the one who was receiving the solemn inheritance of a long line of ancestors was not strong enough to carry it, but on the threshold of the Church of the Ascension, where his father's remains had lain in state previous to their burial in the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul in Petersburg, his strength failed him, and the golden sceptre which his forefathers had carried with such dignity and power dropped from his head, falling on to the floor of the Cathedral with a loud crash. This was observed by the superstitious and construed as a forewarning of that other crash in which the Empire of the Romanoffs was to founder for ever.

The Russian coronations were perhaps most wonderful festivities and made the most impressive sights of any of the many Royal and Imperial pageants of Europe. They were impressive by the magnificence displayed, the gorgeousness of the costumes, jewels and surroundings, the quaint aspect of the wonderful city of Moscow where they took place, and their ancient rites. The old Palace of the Kremlin was a marvellous frame for a spectacle which could not be rivalled anywhere. One lived in the Middle Ages while witnessing it! What could be more thought-provoking than the solemn meal partaken of by the Tsar, his wife and mother, while

The Hill of Hungary

sitting in solemn state under a canopy of cloth of gold in one of the oldest halls of the old dwelling of the Romanoffs, the same one where Ivan the Terrible had sat, and where Peter had dreamt of all the reforms he was to accomplish—their crowns upon their heads and the greatest dignitaries of the Empire attending upon them, while officers with naked swords stood on guard over every dish that was presented to them—ancient customs of an ancient time out of which had been built the splendid grandeur of the Russian nation.

In Austria there was no coronation, but in Hungary the assumption of the Crown of St. Stephen by the King was also a solemn ceremony and was celebrated amidst old traditions that were religiously observed down to the day when the unfortunate Charles of Austria, with his dark-eyed Empress, Zita of Bourbon Parma, received the coronation blessing from the hands of the Primate of Hungary, Archbishop of Presburg. It was a weird festival, with something Oriental and savage about it, and one of its principal features was the ride of the Sovereign, attired in the old dress of a Hungarian magnate, and with a long mantle of cloth of gold on his shoulders, to the historic field near Buda, where, still seated on his horse, on the top of a green hill he swayed his sword around four corners, thus taking possession of the land his ancestors had conquered but never subdued.

With that hill is connected a curious tradition. It is supposed to be always green, and, needless to

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say, this tradition is faithfully preserved by the Hungarians, who see to it that the hill in question is always well tended and regularly watered so that the grass on it is kept fresh. The legend connected with this grass has it that on the day it withers the kingdom of Hungary shall cease to exist. Now, after the death of old Francis Joseph the Coronation Hill suddenly, and from no cause whatever, began to wither, the green grass covering it became yellow, and no efforts could revive it. Of course, this set people talking, and a solemn council was held in the Royal Palace of Buda by the Court officials to see what could be done, as it was unthinkable that the King should see it in such a condition. Gardeners were called to the rescue, but they could do nothing, and even when fresh earth was brought in and fresh seeds planted the result remained the same; the grass would just come out of the ground, and then immediately wither. At last it was decided that in order to overcome the difficulty artificial grass should be planted for the day of the coronation, when it was hoped that the new King would not notice it.

But he did notice it, and it seems that it made a deep impression upon his mind. Charles of Hapsburg was somewhat of a fatalist, and those who knew him well assert that he never forgot that the grass would not grow on Coronation Hill at the time he ascended it to take possession of his kingdom of Hungary, and that from that day he knew that his hold upon his realm was to be but ephemeral.

The Hungarian diadem, or Crown of St. Stephen

Crowning of Empress Elizabeth

as it is called, is a very simple kind of coronet, consisting of a circlet with a very few precious stones, but the Crown of the Queen is a beautiful, though perhaps too massive, diadem. Zita of Bourbon is said to have remarked that it hurt her so much that she did not know how she could keep it upon her head for the long ceremony, during which the whole of the Magyar nobility paid homage to her and to the King by passing solemnly before the throne on which they sat attired in their regalia.

The Russian coronation had the character of a Court festival as well as of a religious one; but the Hungarian one was purely a religious and political ceremony, and no balls or big receptions attended it, one of the reasons for this being that, according to an old tradition, it had to be performed immediately after the accession of a Sovereign, when necessarily he must be in mourning for his predecessor. There was always something sad about it, and the only time when this feature was absent from it was when the late Emperor Francis Joseph, with the beautiful Empress Elizabeth, came to Buda to receive from the hands of the Archbishop of Presburg the diadem of St. Stephen, which consecrated their tenure of the crown of a country whose liberty Francis Joseph had almost destroyed a few years before.

In Germany there was no coronation, but in Prussia it was the custom for its kings to be crowned in Königsberg, a custom which the late Emperor William I would very much have liked to change, but which he was not allowed to dispense with, for,

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to gratify her ambition, his wife, Queen Augusta, insisted on its being performed. It was, however, a simple ceremony which had almost the character of a family affair, and the last time it took place it nearly ended with a comical incident, when the Queen's wig got entangled among the jewels with which her crown was ornamented, and nearly fell off, the wig with it. A lady-in-waiting rushed to the rescue, and with her hands supported the tottering edifice until a few hairpins had repaired the disaster. But, of course, the effect was spoiled, and perhaps it was the remembrance of this untoward affair which prevented the good Augusta from insisting on another coronation after her husband had become the first German Emperor.

This reminds me of another old tradition I have often heard quoted in Berlin, and which relates that an old seer in the days of Frederick the Great had prophesied to the latter most of the important events of his life, and when the King, who, though not owning to it, secretly coveted the dignity of Emperor of the Holy German Empire, then in possession of the Hapsburgs, asked him whether it would ever be held by a Hohenzollern, he had replied: "Yes; but there will only be three Emperors of that line, after which the dynasty will lose its throne." It seems that this old tradition had a good deal to do with the action of King Frederick William IV in regard to the Imperial Crown which the Assembly of Frankfurt had offered to him and which, to the indignation of his whole family, he declined.

Queen Wilhelmina

In Spain there is no coronation, but when the present King came of age his mother resigned to him in a solemn ceremony the reins of the government, receiving in return his grateful thanks and the grant of the second place in the kingdom after him and before any reigning queen. If we are to believe all that we hear, this order has often proved a source of annoyance to the young Queen Victoria, whose relations with her mother-in-law have not always been of the most affectionate character. The Dowager has rather an imperious temper and is fond of power, and in spite of the great tact which, it must be conceded, she has always displayed in the various delicate positions in which she has been placed during her short married life, her regency, and since.

In Holland there was also a solemn recognition of Queen Wilhelmina, after she came of age, in the cathedral of the town of Amsterdam, when the Queen Regent Emma resigned her functions with great pomp. On this occasion the following anecdote was related. The young Queen was told that she would have to make her first public speech, and the President of the Council tried to give to her some suggestions in regard to the things she ought or ought not to say. But Wilhelmina, after listening to him for a while, exclaimed that he need not advise further, because "she knew what she had to say to her people." One may imagine the surprise of this great personage when thus rebuked by a girl of eighteen; but events proved that the little Queen was in the

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right, because the few impromptu words which she spoke went to the heart of her subjects and added considerably to her popularity with them.

The simplest of coronations is that of the kings of Norway. It invariably takes place at Trondhjem, an ancient Norwegian town, in the plainest way. One of its features is that the Sovereigns sit in wooden carved chairs, which are supposed to represent the throne, and which are so uncomfortable that Queen Maud is reported to have said that her back had never ached so much in her life as on the day when she was publicly acclaimed as the Queen of Norway—old Norraway, as it is still sometimes called by its inhabitants.

As I recall these coronations, another spectacle appears before my eyes—the celebration of the three-hundredth year of the accession of the Romanoff dynasty to the Throne of the Ruriks. How solidly established it seemed on that day when Nicholas II drove in state to the Kazan Cathedral, to be present at a solemn thanksgiving service celebrated in honour of the occasion, the memorable occasion, as he called it himself in a manifesto which he addressed to his people—his faithful subjects, as he styled them. Anyone who would have foretold on that grey March morning what the near future held would have been called a madman.

I can still see Nicholas II as he stood erect and grave in the big church, a cloud of incense floating around him, the crowds pressing near him just to catch a glimpse of his slight figure. Beside him the

Romanoff Tercentenary

proud Empress, all in white, with the blue ribbon of the Order of St. Andrew across her chest, a hard expression in her face, with its cold eyes and curled mouth. This disdainful look, which hardly ever left her, procured her many enemies during her sad reign. She is attentive to the service, but still more to her little boy seated in a chair, over which she bends with anxious solicitude, a puny, frail child in whom, nevertheless, are concentrated all the hopes of the dynasty whose jubilee of three hundred years of uninterrupted reign is being celebrated. Of what was this woman of destiny thinking at this solemn moment? Did a vision of the future appear before her? Had she any foreboding of her fall from the high estate which but a few months was to bring about? of the dreary exile in a Siberian solitude? of the last tragedy of her life in this miserable cellar in Ekaterinburg? Three days later Alexandra Feodorovna appeared for the last time in public at the ball given by the nobility of St. Petersburg in honour of the Imperial jubilee, and for the last time she wore the Crown Jewels. She looked magnificent, but as a statue who could not speak. She seemed to be living in a world of her own, far, very far, away from the place and from the people eagerly awaiting her to make a sign to them expressing her satisfaction. She was tired, it was said, tired with all the ceremonies; tired with the noise and clamour of St. Petersburg. She was weary of having to stand and listen to compliments to which she attached no importance; and so, on a day when the ties which ought

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to have united the Tsar more closely to his people, his wife, the Empress of All the Russias, was doing her best to loosen them.

Strange woman, who with many real qualities had fatal gifts which estranged her from the Crown, from the husband who had given it to her, and from all those who in the hour of peril might have stood by both of them.

Others of that company felt some mysterious air of premonition. There was something akin to danger in the air on that 13th of March of the year 1918, when to all appearances Russia was peaceful and prosperous. To a close observer it was evident that the enthusiasm of the man in the street was anything but sincere. But yet no one suspected what was to come, which would sweep away all the pomp and grandeur upon which we were gazing.

Three months later Nicholas II was again the central figure in another world pageant, which to the crowds seemed to consolidate the world's peace for years to come: the marriage of the Kaiser's only daughter with the heir to the wealth and the misfortunes of the Guelph dynasty.

Almost every European Sovereign had been invited to the ceremony, which William II had tried to make the most brilliant one of his reign. The King of England was there with his Queen. They and the Tsar of Russia were the most notable personages in this assembly of monarchs, grand dukes and grand duchesses and representatives of all the reigning houses of Europe. Toasts were exchanged, and

A Brilliant Gathering

promises of eternal friendship renewed and repeated. Everything seemed *couleur de rose* in regard to the future of the world, and Europe breathed more freely than it had done for years as it read of this Prussian wedding witnessed by all that was great, all that was mighty, all that was powerful.

In that White Hall of the old Berlin Schloss the famous and ancient *Fackel Tanz*, or dance with torches, which formed a part of the ceremonies accompanying the marriage of Prussian princes and princesses, was danced for the last time.

If one considers and remembers all these different ceremonies which I have attempted to describe, one cannot help feeling sad at the thought that most of them have dropped into the bosom of history. They had a significance, in spite of the fact that they represented superannuated traditions and times which have lost importance in our modern society, to whom they are no more than dead glories about which men like to dream, though they are sure they would not care to see them revived, for they formed part of a whole which was as harmonious as it was pleasant for those who lived amid the glories and luxury and pomp of a decaying world. Maybe if Sovereigns had not been so full of their own importance as the representatives of God upon earth, many might have remained upon their thrones.

We have the best proof of it in England, the only country where the coronation of a Sovereign is a national event and festivity, and which remains

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popular, though the idea of an absolute monarchy has long ago been superseded by a constitutional government which leaves the individuality of the King intact, and relieves him from the responsibility of any political mistake. This sacredness of the personality of the Sovereign is one of the greatest features of English life, and contains perhaps the secret of England's greatness. The King can do no wrong is a beautiful axiom which the English people have contrived to transform into a great reality. In other European lands Kings have fallen, dynasties been overturned. In the Winter Palace, in St. Petersburg, hordes of savage soldiers are quartered and have stripped it of its former magnificence. The chapel where so many Romanoffs were married or laid out for burial is closed. In the Kremlin the Soviet sits in state. The Vienna Hofburg also is deserted and tenantless, and the Augustine Church has ceased to be the parish of the Hapsburgs, while in Berlin the state apartments of the ancient Schloss are empty. Everything seems a dream—a bright dream which came to an end with such abruptness that it seems even now impossible to realize that it could so swiftly become so hideous a nightmare.

CHAPTER XVII

THOUGHTS

ALL these scenes seem now so far away as to be beyond recall. As, still thinking of them, I lay down my pen, more recent vision comes. In that old Schloss of Berlin, where Kings and Tsars had been received with such honours, the Kaiser stands alone on that same balcony from which he had invited his guests to view the multitude cheering him and his newly married daughter. His face is red with anger and emotion, and he waves his hand with an imperative gesture while a maddened, infuriated crowd acclaim him as a conqueror and avenger. The die has been cast, the glove has been thrown, the challenge has been hurled at the head of unsuspecting humanity.

Even when the war started it failed to arouse to their danger those whom it was going to hurl from their high estate. And how many victims it made, illustrious and humble alike; how many tears it caused to flow; how many hearts it broke! On the Continent, wherever one looks to-day in this aftermath of disaster, one sees nothing but ruin, not only of material things, but also of moral values, of high ideals, unrealized ambitions, foiled vanity. Three

Those I Remember

great Empires have fallen, the heads of which have either been brutally murdered, have died in poverty and humiliation, or survive in exile, followed by the contempt of the world. Of these, one, Charles of Hapsburg, was the most interesting personality, because he paid for other people's sins, for sins he had never condoned but had honestly tried to repair. Another, Nicholas II, was the most pathetic, although not the most guiltless. William of Hohenzollern, the real criminal, although alive, has disappeared from the political and social world as surely as if the grave had closed upon him.

All the same, these times I have been describing had a charm of their own which nothing can ever replace. They were like the end of one of those beautiful days in the tropics; suddenly night comes, and the earth, which looked so glorious before, is shrouded in darkness.

Yes, wonderful indeed were those times in which "Those I Remember"—the people who lived and moved amid their carelessness and their unreasoned joys—were also wonderful, were representatives of something which has passed away from us, of a glory that has departed—their courteous manners, their chivalrous principles, their respect for conventions, and their elegant vices that had something so dainty about them, so refined, so completely pleasant and agreeable. Nothing marred the frivolous beauty of this departed world that hated outsiders and was always so indulgent of the frailties of its members; this society of beautiful women, clever and gallant

Vale

men, gentle philosophers and stately dowagers;
nothing ruffled its serenity or disturbed its calm;
nothing interfered with its endless rush after
pleasure, after love, after all that was sweet and
soft and pretty, or splendid and magnificent.

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